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MARY MAGDALENS
Tears wiped off:
OR,
The VOICE OF
P E A C E
TO AN
Unquiet CONSCIENCE.

WRITTEN
By Way of LETTER,
TO A
Person of QUALITY.

(J. Martin)

AND
Published for the Comfort of all those
who Mourn in *Zion*.

LONDON.

Printed for John Patten in the Alley in
Chancery Lane near Fleet Street.

MAR. MAGDALENE

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Reader,

THe Publisher of this
Treatise, having in his
Eye no fear of thy
dislike, nor regard of thy
applause; hath no other
solicitation, for thy perusal
thereof, then the opinion he
hath, that it may be service-
able to the good of thy
Soul. He thinks he shall be
guilty of a very *Charitable*
mistake, if thou findest an
error in his conjecture; and
thou

thou more obliged to offer,
than he to ask thy pardon
for it. To prescribe *pre-
ventive* or *Recuperative*
Medicines, in a great *Plague-
time*, is no piece of *imperti-
nent officiousness*, but a *pru-
dent discharge* of duty to the
Publick. If thou be so
whole, as not to need a *Phy-
sitian*; thou hast had good
luck, having lived in so *licen-
tious* an Age, and amongst
*Children that are Corrup-
ters*. Give God the glory
of his *Grace*, and despise
not the good *Wishes* of thy
Brethren.

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Tears wip't off:

The VOICE of PEACE

An Unquiet Conscience.

I Thank you for your Charity to me, in *calling* me to my Prayers, and shall by Gods Grace, endeavour to requite it; by a *counter-change* of Charity, in praying for you, as you have desired me. I cannot say, that I am
B sorry

forry

sorry that you stand in need of being *prayed for*: we all do so, and they most of all, and the more for that, who think they need not other mens prayers: But *Madam*, as I cannot but admire your Humility in this Pious Request, (whose gracious Heart, like the *Treasury* of the *Temple*, accepts of *Mites* as well as *Talents*) so, I am not a little ashamed of mine own indigence, and emptiness, and (which is worst of all) of my own unworthiness. I speak it in good earnest *Madam*; and being by your call for my prayers become very sensible of my unfitness, at least for the *Intercessional* part of that duty; I can assure my self, that as I trust you will not be the worse; so shall I be much the better, for my *praying* for you.

But *Madam*, for my prayers only, I presume you did not send me that *Summons*: I cannot then but esteem my self obliged, to render a duty to you, of the same importance; but more immediately tending to the production of that effect, which you have desired me to pray for; and which (perhaps) if more *timely*, and *individually* applyed, the *Disease* had

had not been so inveterate, and raging as it is; nor you so distrustful of the Vertue and Efficacy of *Remedies* as you are.

By some scattered Expressions of my *Friend*, that delivered your Message to me, I very confidently suspect your languishing under the wasting torment of a *Wounded Spirit*: but how long, by what cause, or upon what occasion, I have no hint, upon which I may reasonably ground a Presumption. So innocent hath been that *Act* of your Life, of which I have been a *Spectator*; so rational, close, and undistracted your discourse, that I dare confidently affirm, no *Indications* of this secret *Malady* did ever present themselves to the most acute observer of your Conversation with us. My thoughts concerning such a state in general, I have judged it my duty to deliver; but how pertinent, or conducent to the removal of the particular cause of your trouble, I am not able to divine; for the reasons before mentioned.

1. The Soul of man comes out of

B 2

the

the hands of her Creator, like a rich and curious Watch; carrying in her self, as the Causes of her own motion; so no disorder, till she fall under unskilful, or unruly fingers. Her first immersion into the Body, renders her not onely lyable to the guilt of Original sin, but to the future turbulencies, and excesses of those faculties common to us and Beasts: which, because in them govern'd only by an uncontrollable instinct of Nature are wholly sinless, and have in them no other tendency, but the preservation of that creature in which they work: but with Man it is much otherwise; whose appetites are subjected to a rational choice, under the penalty exacted by a Law, wholly commensurate with reason, and the noble dictates of a Soul, emancipated from the Suggestions and delusions of flesh and blood.

2. Hence it is that she receives in us no wounds, but by our own hands: her Peace is never broken, but by Errors in our Election; and that most times but radically neither; the true
resent.

resentment of our guilt and danger, being subsequence to a reflexive act of the Soul; from whence proceed those *Smiting Thoughts*, able to wear out, or rend an heart of *Adamant*.

The source or spring whereof usually are the consideration either 1. of what we have been; or of 2. what we are; or of 3. what we shall or may be hereafter; the guilt of sin acted, the prevalency of sinful dispositions in our nature, and of enormous habits in our persons; the fear of Relapses, and horreur of future punishments, are that which set mens Souls upon *Tenter-hooks*: and few there be, who have been guilty of any gross sin, whose Repentance (if true) hath not given them some taste of this bitter Cup, appportionate to the course of their unregenerate life.

3. What we have been] is of the same latitude in our Regeneration, from whence we are to compute our *Spiritual life*; as in our Creation, from 1 Cor. 15.
whence we derive our *Natural being*.^{22.} Ephes. 2. 1.
As from *Adam all lived*, so in *Adam all* Rom. 11.
died: all dead in sins and trespasses: God^{32.}
Bath Gal. 3. 22.

hath concluded all under sin, that he might have mercy upon all. Only the Difference is in the circumstances, some greater, some lesser sinners then others; some longer, others less while dead in Sins and Trespases: but the danger, without repentance, is the same to the sinner; the Cure the same to the Physitian. To him the same thing, to raise *Jairus* daughter to life, yet scarcely cold, *Mar. 5. 22.* as to bring *Lazarus* s stinking carcase out of his grave, *John 11. 43.* Both supernatural works, and a Supernatural Worker required to both: yet both effected without any *Intension* of the power by which it was done, because infinitely able to work.

4. But as some of those blind men, whom our Saviour restored to sight, saw at the very first as perfectly, as ever after: but others when their eyes were first opened, *saw men as Trees walking, Mark 8. 24.* so are not the same apprehensions of their spiritual estate to all *Penitents*; though equally restored to Grace and favour with God, and *Federally* justified from
the

the guilt of *past* Sins. The Causes hereof are various, arising partly from the *Complexion*, and *natural* or *acquisite* temper of the Persons themselves; partly from some errors in such, who applied to them the *outward means*, and *ministration* of their Repentance; partly from some *outward accidents* of life; and partly from the *Suggestions*, and *Delusions of Satan*, with such like.

Some persons are naturally more apt to impressions of Sadness, Fear, and Distrust, then are others. Penetrating and quick resentments of danger, once certainly incurr'd, render some *weak spirits* distrustful of their safety a long time after, be it never so sure and visible: like men startled out of Melancholick and frightful dreams, who although awake, cannot presently be perswaded, that they are free from peril. The very apprehension of the danger, his churlishness and folly had cast him into, made *Nabals* heart *die* within him, 1 *Sam.* 25. 37.

It cannot be denied by the *strongest* Christian, that the guilt of sin once

truly apprehended, with all the consequents of horreur it draws after it, is able to sink a very clear and serene soul into an *Abyss* of black and sad thoughts; from which nothing is able to *buoy*, and raise it up, but the light of God's countenance, shining upon, and influencing *that spirit*, by forcible assistances of Grace. But yet most evident it is, that the *mourning* of some Christians is like that of *Rachel*, they will not be comforted: yea so predominant in them, sometimes, is that torpid and pensive humour, that it converts comforts themselves into matter of discomfort: the goodness, patience, and long-suffering of Almighty God, together with his unfeigned offers of mercy, and pardon to all that truly turn unto him, (those high and excellent *Cordials* for Soule-sick Christians) being by the prejudices of a *misguided imagination* corrupted into most bitter jealousies, either against God or themselves.

Sometimes their spiritual troubles spring from the passions or unskillfulness of the *Ministry*, under which such persons live; who either want-
ing

ing the sagacity, dexterity, or (which is most to be feared) the Charity of the Apostle, 1 Cor. 19. 20, 22. *to become all things to all men*; especially in that most Christian and wholsome branch of it; the *being weak with them who are weak*, in the Flock of Christ; thunder out the threatnings of the Gospel promiscuously in the ears of all; *making their hearts sad whom God hath not made sad*, Ezek. 13. 22. and so *vexing them whom God hath wounded*, Psal. 69. 27. instead of calling, encouraging, and comforting sinners under Repentance (*that small and still voice*) terrifying them with the Menaces of the Law, (*that loud and furious wind*;) and casting upon men strong suspicions of their having elapsed the time of mercy; seeming to antedate the *great and terrible day of the Lord*, by taking the sentence of condemnation out of his mouth. Not considering, that the Ministers of the Gospel have their Commissions dated from *Sion*, and not from *Sinai*; and that the method and language of St. *Paul* in the Pulpit, is not only more suitable to that Message of Peace, but most imitable

table by us, because it proved so successful in the business of *Reconciling men to God*.

I know that a *Son of Thunder* may have much said in his behalf, from these evil and deaf times in which we live: *to lipt up the voice like a Trumpet, and to shew the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins, Isai. 8. 1.* is a duty, strongly and indispensably lying on a Minister of the Gospel at all times, much more in such an age as this we live in, wherein so many thousands of Christians *hold the truth of God in unrighteousness, Rom. 1. 18.* and *turn his Grace into wantonness, Jud. 4.* justifying not onely *Samaria*, but *Sodom* and her Sisters; by outballancing her, and them, in all manner of *carnal* and *spiritual* pollutions: but that we speak is *mostly* against the undue care of some *Preachers* of the Gospel, not sufficiently *heeding* and *discriminating* such who mourn in *Zion*, *Ezek. 9. 4.* upon whose foreheads *Ezekiel's* mark hath past, and against whom the severities of those *Comminations* ought not to be used.

Some-

Sometimes this *Trouble of mind*, (if it doth not wholly spring,) yet receiveth much strength and nourishment from some *Accidents* of life. Every unusual circumstance in providential dispensations, in the apprehensions of such men, carries with it the Shape and Terror of *Divine Revenge*: and all loving corrections of a most wise and merciful *Father*, are reckoned upon as the *sad Presages* of everlasting Torments. Nothing but the angry frowns of a terrible Judge, flaming Torches, Fire and Brimstone, are the *Scenes* and *Phantasms* of such clouded brains: yea, so sullen and distrustfull is the Repentance of such men, that they suspect every blessing, and good thing, that God bestows upon them in this world, as so many *golden Balls* cast out before them, to betray them in their *Race*. They eat, drink, sleep, converse with such anxiety of Spirit, that thereby they become intolerable to themselves and others. Again,

Satan most times hath a deep hand in these troubles; who being unchangeably malicious toward mankind, incessantly disturbs the Peace
of

of such Christians whom he cannot ruine. Yet so secret and close are his *Devices*, that many prudent Christians are not able (as indeed it is very difficult) to discern, betwixt his *injections*, and the *motions* of their own *Appetites*. By which error Satan exceedingly troubles their quiet, and sets them into perpetual quarrels against themselves, whereby he thinks it not impossible, at last to *ingulph* them in *Despair*.

To this may be added, that some *False Principles* have in them a very immediate tendency to beget trouble in mens minds, who are of *instable judgments*, but yet of a *good and ingenuous disposition*: those especially concerning the *Irresistibility* of *saving Grace*, the *necessity* of *ones believing himself to be Justified*, *unconditionate Election to Salvation*, with some others, whose falsity is plainly demonstrated by many Excellent *Treatises* of learned, judicious, and pious *Divines*.

Neither is it a consideration impertinent to the matter in hand, that there is a difference worthy our observation, betwixt Sin in the *Memo-*

ry, and in the *Conscience* of a Sinner; the not perception whereof may cause great trouble and disquiet in mens minds. For as the *Conscience* and the *Memory* are not really one and the same thing; so neither is sin to be accounted of the same concernment to the Sinner, when it is only represented by the *Memory*, and when charged upon him by his *Conscience*. Usually, proportionable to the measure of our *Faith* and *Repentance* is our Peace of *Conscience*; by these are the Marks and Characters of our Guilt purged away by degrees: but the *transient Act* of Sin committed, is ever recollected by the *Memory*, apportionately to the natural vigour of the faculty in every man. And from hence it is, that in the fourfold distinction of *Conscience*, there is one sort which is said to be good, but not quiet; which (for my own part) I conceive to be an effect, produced betwixt the *memorative* and *imaginative* faculties; rather than a true and distinct state of *Conscience* in a Christian: it being, to my understanding, equally possible for the
Ima-

Imagination, to act and personate *Conscience* (in some men) as well in the *punitive* and *vindicative*, as in the *affirmative* and *interpretative* power of *Law*. Where the *Imagination* (as *Conscience*) may *make Law* to govern mens actions, as in *some* it confessedly doth; it is not disproportionable to *Reason* to believe, that *Imagination* may likewise perplex, and punish *those men* for the breach of such *Laws*, as likewise *Conscience* doth.

5. But let the *Causes* and *Occasions* of these *Distempers* be what they will; be it the *Conscience*, or *imaginative Faculty*, or *Memory*, or *all*, or any other that procures, or promotes this trouble; usually, these are the effects thereof, in sad reiterated *Objections*.

OBJECTION

OBJECTION I.

My Sins are not as other mens, they are not the Spots of Gods Children: they have these Circumstances, that render them most formidable. They are 1. more then other mens, 2. greater, 3. more loved, 4. longer lived in, 5. less grieved for, then the Sins of other men.

SOLUTION.

6. **P**Ut all these Circumstances together, but the last (which shall be answered by it self) your sins can be but great, many, loved, relapsed, and perhaps after sharp Corrections for them, Vows against them, sence of strength and ability through grace, to oppose, resist, and overcome them, and all the most powerful temptations to them, and this acknowledged, and owned by your self, in your impassionate, and deliberate thoughts.

Now what hinders the Remission of such Sins? Are these the first *Scarlet sins* that have ever been brought before

before the *Throne of Grace*, to receive another *tincture* by the hands of Mercy and pardon? Is there any incapacity in the Sinner, any defect in the means, any qualification in themselves, any barre or obstacle to the Judge, that such a sinner should not be remitted?

What makes you incapable of Pardon? Any *Decree* concerning your person, in Gods *secret Will*? In his *revealed Will* there is nothing but *Grace* and *Mercy* offered to you, because to *all that truly repent and turn unto him*, *Ezek. 18. 21, 22.* but if you suspect the *Will of Gods purpose*, what he hath determined concerning your Person, in that *Will*; you must know, that as there are not two *Wills* in the *Divine Majesty*, nor two *contradictory Acts* of one and the same *Will*: So may you assure your self, that what may directly be concluded from his *Revealed Will* concerning the salvation of Mankind, you have your *joynt-interest* therein, with the rest of the *Redeemed World*: and that no *Decree* hath from all Eternity been past against you, whereby a barre is set against

against all your good and square endeavours, and your person rejected into a *fatal necessity* of being damned. Impossible indeed it is that such *dormant Attainders* should lye against the Persons of some men, for the Prevarication and Rebellion of our first Parents, and yet that *General Act* of the *Grace and Favour of Almighty God*, be so solemnly proclaimed by that great *Ambassador of our Reconciliation*, *1 Tim.* 2. 4.

OBJECTION II.

But I have made my self uncapable by losing the opportunities, and heretofore despightfully using both the inward, and outward means of my Calling; and therefore justly is that fallen upon me, foretold and threatned in Prov. i. 24. Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, &c. vers. 26. I will laugh at your Calamity, &c.

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SOLU:

SOLUTION.

7. **I**F by the *Opportunity* or *Season* of repenting unto Salvation, you mean one *point* of time, where-in God doth *sufficiently once for all*, or *as the last tundry thereof*, not only offer us the *means* of *Grace*, but also *sufficiently prepare* and *dispose* the Will to receive it: I doubt not, but that answer of our Saviour to his Disciples, *Act. i. 7.* will be very applyable to you, *It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put into his own power.* As *Grace* it self is the *free* and *undeserved Gift* of God, so are the *circumstances* of giving it, for time, manner, and measure, His; and disposed of according to the *Will of his purpose*, wherewith you are not made acquainted, nor privy to any determination concerning your self, unless you have had some known Revelation thereof. I believe that the *Day of Grace*, as far as we are able to collect, is not *shut up*; nor the *Sun of Righteousness*, that at our Saviour's Baptism rose upon our
Souls,

Souls with healing in His Wings, set, and gone down over us, till our life be ended. Some were called at the *eleventh hour*, when there was but one hour more to work in: yet by the bountiful promise of the Lord of the Vineyard were rewarded with the *Penny*, i.e. everlasting life, as well as they who bore the burden and heat of the day, *Matth. 20.9.* Sincerity of Resolution is pretious in God's eye: and where sufficient time to approve the same by good works is not allowed, I doubt not of the salvable state of that Soul. Yet I do profess not to believe, that such an one shall have an equall share of Glory with Saints of the *first magnitude*; neither can there in reason be so comfortable a posture of mind lookt for in such an one: this being most commonly the Result of that experience we have of our own repentance, by bringing forth fruits *worthy* of it; which ought, when time and means permit, to carry in them a due proportion to the continuance and vileness of our former unregenerate life.

Now, though Almighty God doth

sometime accept the Will for the Deed, *viz.* a *firm* and *irrefragable* *Temptation-proof* *Resolution* of Conversion for all *future actual performances* thereof; as being able to Foresee, that that man would perform his resolutions, in case God did permit him so much time: yet should no man upon this consideration defer his Repentance, but rather most *studiously* imbrace the present time offered; not only for that this is to be interpreted an affront of the Divine Majesty, *by turning the Grace of God into wantonness*; but for that no man is assured, that ever he shall have any such *late and pretious Minute* vouchsafed unto him; or if it be, can possibly have any assurance, that he will be true to his word with God, in his Vows and Resolutions; God alone, with whom all future things are present, being able to foreknow the soundness and steadiness of such *shipwrackt ingagers*. And as these dependencies are seldom so successful (at least not so often) as many men imagine, and in Charity we may very far hope; so would I have them to be

be esteemed, as such, which can have no right *Aspect* upon, nor encouragement from, the *usual, regular* Proceedings of the *Divine Majesty*: but are rather to be layd on the *unpromised excesses* and *superabundancies* of an infinite goodness, extending it self to a sinner repenting him of his sins, beyond the full and free limits of the *first gracious* Concession of Pardon: from a reliance on which, as I would not deter any the most grievous offender, whose neglects and former Supinuity had cast him on this *little Plank*, in a Sea of Perplexities, sodo I almost assure my self, that such a Christian, who dares continue in sin, upon the confidence of this *superabundance of Grace*, shall never be partaker thereof; this being a *Pearl* of too incomparable a value to be cast before that *Swine*, who hath so contemptuously *trampled* it under his feet.

Yet, if you mark it, your Case is far different from the state of such a man, who hath neglected (say despised) the offers of mercy till the last minute of his life, wherein he rather

snatches after, than imbraces Pardon; being more sensible of his own danger than the love of God: for (blessed be God) you have not received any *Summons* to a speedy *account* of your *Stewardship*, by a decrepit old age, or a violent dileate, or other contingency; but have made it your blessed choice, to *double your Pace* in the wayes of Holiness; having yet (as far as we are able to guess) the *Postmeridian* part of your *Day* before you, time enough by the good blessing of God to finish your *Task* which is set you, ere the night come wherein no man can work. *Jo. 9.4.*

As for your *Despightfully using the Spirit of Grace*, *Heb. 10. 29.* (as you phrase it after *St. Paul*) an Expression more suitable to a state of *Apostacy* then *Unregeneracy*, (as you would have me suppose yours to be) as in your former course of life, you set (if I may believe your self) too little an esteem upon the ways of God, (the manner of unregenerate men:) so have you now too bitter a censure upon your own, the sins of our unregenerate life being (after conversion) by

by all *Divines* (I presume) accounted
 araungable, under the stile of Infirmi-
 ties; and therefore of what sort soever,
 yet pardonable upon Repentance.

OBJECTION III.

*I grant (say you) that it may be with
 some Christians as with Saint
 Paul ; he was a most violent Perse-
 cutor of the Church, but then it was
 in a state of Ignorance and Unbelief,
 and therefore he says, God had mer-
 cy upon him, because he did it
 through Ignorance, and in Infide-
 lity : From whence 'tis easie to infer,
 that had St. Paul maliciously and
 knowingly acted those outrages a-
 gainst the Church of Christ, he had
 undoubtedly been excluded from all
 hopes of Pardon ; What think you
 then will become of me , who knew
 the will of my Master, and did it not.*

SOLUTION.

8. **T**Hat Saint *Paul* did ignorantly
 persecute the Church of *Christ*
 is unquestionable ; and that if Saint

Paul had done the same Knowingly, and Maliciously, he had not had any grounds to expect Pardon, may probably be true; but I do not take it to be out of all Question, but the Inference from hence against your self is *Illogical*, and will by no means follow upon those *Premises*. For thus your Argument stands, Saint *Paul* had mercy from God for persecuting the Church of *Christ* ignorantly, therefore whoever committeth any sin against *Conscience and Knowledge*, shall not have mercy, and such sins I am guilty of.

I shall not stand to shew you the *falsity* of this way of reasoning, but only discover unto you how erroneous your Principles are, and that so evidently, as I need not torture you into a confession thereof. Do you profess to believe that there is an equality in all kinds of Sin? that Adultery is not a greater sin than Swearing? Murder or Idolatry than Sabbath-breach? Rebellion than Theft? I am assured you are not involved in this gross error. But then do you believe, that that circumstance [of doing it Knowingly]

ingly] can render the same sin unpardonable, which if done Ignorantly, will upon Repentance undoubtedly be forgiven. *Who then can be saved?* What were the sins of *David* and of Saint *Peter*? were they not sins against Knowledge, yet Repentance restored both of them to their former station in God's favour; you cannot suppose that those persons with whom our Saviour convers'd, were all of them Sinners only out of Ignorance: *Mary Magdalene* was never held to be *Ignorant* (much less to be inculpably so,) that her course of life was not agreeable to the Law of God: yet so dear was she to our Saviour, upon her hearty Repentance, *That after his Resurrection he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven Devils,* Mar. 16.9.

OBJECTI³

OBJECTION IV.

But under the Law the Soul that did ought presumptuously, was to be cut off from Israel.

SOLUTION.

9. **W**E are not under the Law but under Grace; and Saint Paul tells us plainly, that a main Branch of that Priviledge is, *That by Him, (i.e. Christ) all that believe are justified from all things, from which Ye (i.e. the Jews) could not be justified by the Law of Moses, Act. 13. 39.* from whence 'tis clear, that Remission of sins is given to all Sinners, who repent and believe the Gospel. Besides, every sin that a man commits against Knowledge, is not a sin of *Presumption*, or a sin committed with an *high Hand*; Presumption is not an error of, or in the Understanding, but in the Will; at least is much more fixt in the Will, than in the Intellectual faculty, and therefore to sin against Knowledge, and to sin Presumptuously, are not convertible, and the same

same thing; Presumption being not only the highest degree of Wilfulness, and being properly plac'd under the vice of *Audacity*; but it reflects more upon the person of the Law-maker, than on the Law it self; and the contempt of persons in Authority is ever more grievously punished than the breach of such Laws and Constitutions; as are made by them.

OBJECTION V.

But to relapse into sin, after not only Resolutions and Vows against it, as they who sin after Baptism do, is intolerable, and a sign of one that hath forfeited the Grace that is given him, and is judicially hardned by God.

SOLUTION.

10. **T**O sin, and to relapse into sin, after a Vow against it, is that thing indeed which every Baptized Christian doth: and in those who are *Adult*, or at years of discretion

tion (not invincibly ignorant of their Obligation) is infallibly not only a very great Aggravation of sin, but a sin it self: and such an Offender is (in very truth) not only a great Dishonor to the Gospel of *Christ*, but a great scandal to the *Communion of Saints*, dis-inherited (and that actually) of his interest in the Kingdom of *Christ*, whilest he continues in that state of Impenitency: but when the course is broken, the case is quite the contrary; and the *Prodigal* returning, capable of as benign and as hospital a *Reception* in his Fathers house, as was that other Son, able to boast of his good demeanour from his Childhood. This is the case of repentant Sinners, and for such it is, that when they (nay though but a single one) return, *There is joy in the presence of the Angels of God*, Luk. 15. 12.

But for the *Vow in the Baptism*, I am not (for the present) of opinion, that it is any aggravation of sin, till the baptised person comes up to years of Discretion, and hath either actually taken upon him the performance of his *Baptismal Vow*, or else hath attain'd
so

so much knowledge of his Profession, as that he hath, or may have information that he was initiated thereunto, and admitted under such a *solemn Stipulation*. But when I speak of *Actual* taking upon him the performance of this Vow, I do not mean that solemn, direct, oral, and publick transferring the Obligation on himself in *Episcopal Confirmation*: but also the doing any Christian duty of Communion, whereby he doth (though but *implicitly*) own his Faith; and consequently his Obligation thereto, made on his behalf by *Sureties* in his Baptisme.

And again, you must conceive, that every wilful sin against Knowledge and Conscience (even in those who are *adult*, and have Actually put themselves under the performance of the Vow) is no *abdication* of our Vow in Baptisme, neither do I apprehend that person which so offends, to be guilty of Perjury, upon every Act of such sin of Wilfulness, no more than I believe, that every single disobedience of her Husband may be interpreted to be a perjury in the Wife, because
she

she hath promised, and solemnly vowed to obey him in the *Marriage Contract*.

I confess, that an habitual course of wilful sin, in such as do own their profession; nay, that any sin presumptuously committed against the *Divine Majesty*, doth imply a breach of this *Vow*, as well as final *Apostacy*; yea, that the abnegation of any evident *fundamental* of Religion, as the *Resurrection of the Dead*, the Doctrine of the ever *blessed and holy Trinity*, (after *first and second Admonition*, Tit. 3. 10. &c.) is a breach of the Vow in Baptisme; but that every Act of wilful sin is such, is to my Apprehension no more a truth, than for a Christian of the Protestant perswasion to deny *Christs local descension into Hell*, (which hath no undeniable ground in Scripture) and for that error (for to that Perswasion the Church is not infallible) to be held guilty of perjury in breaking the *second* clause or branch of this Vow in *Baptisme*, requiring him to *believe all the Articles of the Christian faith*, as well as doth the *first and third*, exact from him a
for-

forsaking the Devil, the World, the Flesh, and the keeping of God's holy Will and commandments all the days of my life.

But let the most that you fear be granted, and you be held guilty of as many perjuries, as you committed other sins, and this not only in your own esteem, but in the opinions of learned *Divines*, yet still this may render that condition to be more lamented, but it cannot make it irrecoverable; for is there any thing in Scripture more frequent than God's Messages by his Prophets to the people of the *Jews*, calling them to repentance, and that after *Covenant breach*, and promising them pardon if they would repent, and convert unto him? The Prophet *Jeremy* may supersede your searching any other Scriptures to this purpose, who indeed is abundant in those promises of Mercy, and therefore a Book very fit to comfort every penitent Soul, and likewise as fit by reason of the Threatnings therein, to convert the Impenitent.

As for that you speak concerning *Judicial Induration*, or God's hardening men's hearts in Judgment; I confess,

Mat. 25. 28. fess, that there is a taking away the
 Luk. 8. 18. *Talent* from the slothful Servant, a
 withdrawing of Grace from him
 that doth not use it to that end for
 which it was given him by God: but
 that such a Judgment is not (ordina-
 rily) revealed, save by the treasuring
 up of wrath against the day of wrath,
 the final impenitence of him who
 is thus *judicially* hardened by God,
 will be difficult to prove, there being
 no very sure Example of this *Indura-
 tion* in Scripture, save that of *Pharaoh*,
 in whom those Consequents were
 most visible; and of those obstinate
 and incredulous *Jews* to whom our
 Saviour preachd, or in whose presence
 or Countrey he wrought so many Mi-
 racles, mentioned in *Mat. 13. 14, 15.*
 but that you are in danger of such *ju-
 dicial* Induration as this, is a very re-
 mote fear, and to my judgment whol-
 ly inconsistent with your present
 Christian Deportment.

OBJECTION

OBJECTION. VI.

But you say, My Sins are confessedly very great, (being accompanied with such circumstances as they are) even with all the Allowances your Charity or Judgment can afford them: they cannot then but require a proportionable Grief for them, which as yet I find not in my self; Moses Rod, that drew water from Rocks of the Wilderness, being not able to break and wound my stony Heart into Rivers of Tears, such as are fit to cleanse and wrince away these stains of Sin.

SOLUTION

II. **T**His complaint is but a retrieve of one of those *Aggravations* of your Sins mentioned by you at the first, and by me deferred to be satisfied at that time. I say therefore that it cannot be denied, but that Grief for sin committed ought to bear some proportion with the heinousness of our Crimes, for which we desire to grieve and lament: but

D you

you may be very unfit to judge of this proportion; especially seeing your *Grief* and *Revenge*, with an intermixture of other *Irafcible Passions*, hath made you already too obnoxious to the *devices* of Satan, 2 *Cor.* 2. 11. and *Peter* three times denied that he knew his Master, *Mark* 14. 66, and that with Cursings and Swearings, *Imprecations* (perhaps) upon himself, if he knew any *such man*, *Luk.* 22. 55. Here was a Complication of very gross sins, as Swearing, Cursing, Denial of his Master, whom lately he professed to be the *Son of God*, and all this a flat Perjury; yet you never read of Tears shed for these Sins more than once: but then they are recorded to be *bitter* ones; what they wanted in the *Extrinfecal* Proportion to the Standard of man's Judgment, they had in the *Intrinfick* value, most proportionable to the Judgment of God.

Mat. 26. 75.

Mar. 14. 72.

Luk. 22. 62.

You must know then, that *Grief* and *Shame*, and such-like *Affections* of the *Irafcible Appetite*, are parts of that *corrective* Justice which we execute upon our selves; and very properly

perly on the *lower Soul*, because that hath been most instrumental in our Sins, and hath likewise had the greatest share of the Sensual Pleasure received in sinning; as also for that she is the most proper instrument to macerate and chastise the Body, (the other *Associate* and *Conspirator* in offending.) That which ought to give the greatest satisfaction to the Penitent, concerning the *Truth* and *Measure* of his Sorrow for Sin, is the Averestation of his *Spirit* and *Mind* to *all* former evil wayes, as such; with a full Resolution and sincere Endeavour to avoid and fly *all* Sin for the time to come, and to embrace and practise most impartially *all* Rules of *Godliness*, *Righteousness*, and *Sobriety*, at what rate soever he purchase the performance of them; facilitating his way thereto by a frequent and prudent exercise of such helps of Mortification, as his Lord and Master Christ, and the Church his Mother, have recommended by Example, or enjoyned by Precept.

Neither is there any cause to complain, that these *Severe Courses* are

not reconcileable to a cheerful manner of living in this world, so far as not to cast any torpid Languishments on our frail Bodies, or to render our selves compliable with sober and honest conversation: for they who have, and daily do make Tryal of these *Rules* and *Canons* for a Christian man's life, do not find so much trouble in the practice of them, as in the *sad Reflections* on their former unregenerate State; which yet they may now contemplate with Glory to God, and Comfort to themselves, who through the Grace of our *Lord Jesus Christ* hath given them the victory over so Unwearied, so Politick, and so Powerful Enemies to their Salvation: if Reason can perswade you, that it is matter of Sadness for a man to pass through rough and ditty wayes, that he may in short time go and be possesst of a Kingdom; or if you can imagine, that that man hath reasonable cause of Complaint, who is sure to escape the bloody hands of *Assassines*, if he will but take the pains to *winde* himself after a sure *Guide*, through a *narrow Path*, beset here

here and there with Briars and Thorns; then, and not else, hath that man cause to complain of the uncheerfulness of an Holy Life, who hath engaged to follow *Christ* his Leader, in the Duties and Contingencies of so Noble a Profession.

OBJECTION VII.

But I still fear the Issue of all my Travails; not thinking any thing too Dear to be bought, or too heavy to be born, so I might be assured to finish my Course with joy: I am told by my Saviour himself, that many shall seek to enter in at the straight gate, and shall not be able to enter. If my former sins be not pardoned, all I do will be to no purpose; the not accepting of my Person will render all the good I do contemptible, and punishable by God, as being so many guilded Sins, as such Moral works are wont to be called.

SOLUTION.

12. **I**F nothing but your Pardon in your hand will satisfie you, and shake off the Scruples and Perplexities of your mind; you must know, that this Pardon and Justification of ours, is rather under *Promise* now, and by *Title* of Law, than *Actually* pass'd upon our Souls in this Life: yet are not we the less secure of it, for the Word of God is unchangeable; but no man hath reason to expect, with *Unconditionate* and *Absolute* Assurance, what must depend upon our own *Co-operation* with the Grace of God. And though God hath assured us, that *He will not forsake us, 'till we forsake Him*, no nor presently then neither; yet what assurance we shall have of our own endeavours, must be sought for in the promises of God made and perform'd to his gracious Servants, and also in our own *free Wills*; and the perseverance of them in Grace daily and minutely begged of Him in Prayer. God first gives us Grace to ask, then commands

Luk. 19. 26.

1 Co. 15.

1st.

2 Pet. 2. 9.

Phil. 1. 6.

mands us to ask, then helps our Infirmities in asking, and promises he will give if we ask as he hath bid us; if then our wants be not supplied, where will the fault lie but in our selves? Grace is cheaply enough obtained, if it may be had for the *asking*, and increas'd for the *using*.

But being you speak of *God's not accepting your Person*, as if that had so necessary and immediate an influence upon all your *practice*, that not only nothing were accepted without it, but every thing *for* it, and *from* it; we will a little consider that expression, as it is used in Scripture, with reflection upon the *erroneous* doctrine wherein you seem to me to be (I believe unwittingly) involved.

To accept any ones person hath in Scripture a two-fold sense: sometimes it is taken in a good sense, but not often; so in 1 *Sam.* 25. 35. where *David* being interceded with by the eloquence, wisdom, and presence of *Abigail*, changeth his determination of destroying her Husband *Nabal* and his Family, and this is there called *an accepting of her Person*. In a bad

sense it is more usually found; so God forbids the *Ministers of Justice* to accept mens Persons, Lev. 16.15. and in this sense it is, that God will not accept the Persons of men, 2 Sam. 14. 14. Mat. 22.16. Cal. 2. 6. yea in this sense the Person of God Himself may be, but must not be accepted, as in Job. 13. 7, 8. *Will ye speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for him? will ye accept His person?* wherein Job admonisheth his Friends that they should not argue for God (with opinion thereby to vindicate his Justice) from false Allegations of Job's Hypocrisie. So do those men, who equivocate, or lye, steal, rob, commit Sacrilege and Murder for God's glory, &c. accept the person of God.

When therefore the Phrase of [*accepting of mens persons*] is used in a good sense, it signifieth thus much, That the person of such a man in conjunction with his good qualifications, or deserts, is accepted and rewarded: but when it signifies to a bad sense, then it imports thus much, that such a man is accepted, favour'd, or rewarded, without any intuition of his Qualifications

lifications be they good or evil, this is Partiality and Injustice, and we may not use it even for God himself.

Now, by your Objection, I conceive, you believe that he is an Acceptor of Persons in this last sense, *viz.* an *absolute Elector*, who out of the *mass* of Mankind corrupted, did by virtue of his *Sovereign power*, and *Omnipotent will*, *irrespectively* choose some few mens *Persons*, and reprobate Myriades of others, without any *provisional regard* to their Works, expressly contrary to that of Saint Paul, Gal. 2.6. where the Apostle sayes, *that God respects no Man's person*, (the Gentiles being as eligible in God's eye, as the *lineal seed of Abraham*, of which the *Jews* could not easily be perswaded,) neither *James* nor *Peter*, who seemed to be *pillars*, being preferred and respected before Saint Paul, (a *late abortive Convert*,) by *Him who seeth not as man seeth*. And therefore if God hath not elected some, and reprobated others, without *provision* and *intuition* of their Qualifications, as foreseeing what good, or what bad, or what no-use men would make
of

of *Grace given*, and consequently, thereby *assure* or *divest* themselves of the Advantages and Priviledges of *God's common love to Mankind*; your fear of not being accepted, because God hath from all Eternity some *Quarrel* or *No Love* to your Person, is not only frivolous, but dangerous, and in it self *destructive* of all your Labours and Endeavours for Eternal Life, *keeping* them under the *dismal* and false apprehension of *Tyranny* in the Divine Majesty, which the Heathens themselves rejected, under the Notion of *Superstition*.

To be short, I shall not only confront the Answer of God to *Cain*, *Gen. 4.7.* (whom I believe the *Assertors* of that Doctrine have ever held to be a Reprobate) against the strongest Argument that may be used for inducing and confirming the belief of this *Prosopoleptical* way of electing and reprobating men, without any intuition of their good or evil Deeds: [*If thou do well, shalt thou not be accepted?*] from whence are inferred these two things; First, that *Cain* himself might have offered an acceptable Sacrifice
to

to God as well as *Abel*, and Secondly, if he had done so, he had been accepted by God, as well as was his Brother. So that it was not any Quarrel and Hatred that God had to the person of *Cain*, *irrespective* consider'd; but either to the Evil that he had *formerly done*. (for we cannot presume *Cain* to have lived without sin, 'till the time of the offering that Sacrifice, nor doth the Text, assert *that* to be the *first* Sacrifice, that either he or *Abel* offered) or that which he had now committed in offering a *Sacrifice* not worthy God's acceptance at his hands,

What reason therefore you should have to fear the success of your Labours in the Lord, upon *Misprision* of *Personal Acceptance* with God, you see by what hath been said; as also of your *groundless* fears of not being able to enter in at the straight Gate; our Saviour having (if you mark it) threatened, not them who *strive*. (because he hath commanded that *active, industrious* way of attempting) but them ^{Luk. 24. A} who only *seek*, (a way of getting ^{vis. De} Heaven very different from the former) ^{mer)}

mer) importing very little more (though no more to the purpose) than *Balaam's Wish*, that he *might dye the death of the Righteous.* Numb. 23. 10.

OBJECTION VIII.

But though it will follow from hence, that Personal Assurance of Remission and Pardon of Sin, be not always a necessary effect of God's pardoning of us, or our being in a way to be pardoned: yet surely it is somewhat unlikely (say you) that the clean contrary, viz. a perswasion that I shall not be pardoned, should flow from so happy a condition, as you would make me believe I am in.

SOLUTION.

13. **I**F you should thoroughly examine your self, that you do thus perswade your self, will undoubtedly appear to be false. For to what purpose do you then *pray, fast, and give Alms*, lead a *strict and severe* life, &c. if you were indeed perswaded that you should not be saved? would any one but a mad-man

man keep on his pace, in rough, and almost impassable wayes, if he were certainly assured that he should never come to his journeys end? his feet must needs be thought to confute his tongue, if he should do thus.

Besides, how preposterous a thing were it, if you should take such sharp and *severe* courses, as you do, to enlarge your score, supposing all these Actions of yours should be charged by God upon your account, as so many *gilded* sins, as you lately termed them? But this, I think, you will have little reason to be afraid of, seeing our Saviour hath told you, that the Alms-deeds and Prayers of the Pharisees themselves were so rewarded, as they desired they should be, (*viz.* with the *Praises* and *Commendations* of men, *Matth.* 6. 16.) and are not by him either styl'd *sins*, or threatned with any punishment, more than with the no-ground of expecting a Reward from God.

But as concerning the pardon of our sin, it will be very useful to observe these four things. 1. That the point of Faith, concerning *Remission of Sin*,

Sin, is, That by *Christ*, *Remission of Sins* is given to Mankind through Faith in his Blood. 2. That this *Remission* is not *absolutely*, though *freely* given; but doth depend upon certain *Conditions* or Qualifications, whereby men are made fit and capable of receiving it. 3. That the Rules, as well for the means of conveying this *Donation* to us, as for our aptitude and capacity to receive the benefit thereof, are to be sought out and taken from the Scriptures. 4. That because many things of Importance, concerning this doctrine, are to be deduced from the Scriptures, by the *mediation* of Humane understanding, it is a mark both of Piety, Wisdom, and Humility, to take the *Catholique Church* for our Guide and reliance therein. False Interpretations of Scripture, prove either full of Perplexity, or Danger, or both, to our selves and others; but most especially in such Doctrines, so nearly importing our Salvation, as this of *Remission of Sin* doth. Therefore it is not to be regarded, by what *Mediums*, or from what *Principles* your Conclusions

sions are drawn, if they be only your *own*: if you mean to sail securely amidst the Tempests raised in the world by such diversity of Judgments and Imaginations, embarque your self in the *Universal Consentient*, and *Ancient Interpretations* and *Doctrines* of the *Church*; and do not adventure so pretious a Fraught as is your Soul, redeemed with the blood of *Christ*, in the tottering Boat of your own, or other mens *private Interpretations* of Scripture. The *Church* teacheth you this doctrine, viz. 1. That you are pardonable upon your Faith and Repentance. 2. That God hath promised (who cannot lye, *Heb. 6. 18.*) that he will pardon you, if you believe and repent. 3. That the *Manifestation* of God's pardoning your sins, is at present but imperfectly, and inchoately wrought in your Heart by the *Holy Ghost*, and the use of Sacraments; but the full Evidence thereof is to be expected from *Christ* the Judge, and to be patiently and chearfully waited for by Faith in the Promises. 4. That the *Testimony* of your own Spirit, arising from your sincere conversation

versation in the Doctrines of the Gospel, is the most *certain Evidence* that you or any man can *ordinarily* expect in this life, and all this from pregnant Testimony of Scripture.

For you, who hold a lawful and uninterrupted Succession of *Ministers* in the *Church* of Christ; you cannot but believe; that in the hands of the Church lyes much of your Peace, as well as of your Safety: considering the *power* they have over you, *Heb. 13. 17.* and the *Power* they have for you; *John 20. 21. 22. 23.* and *both* these derived down to this present Age, and shall so continue wheresoever the Church shall be, (though there be no necessity that they should be continued wheresoever Christians are) by virtue of our Saviour's promise, even to the end of the World. And these *powers* to be pleaded for *by them*, and submitted unto *by you*, as being of *Divine right*, framed and appointed by the *Holy Ghost*, (the principal *Administrator* of Church Government) for the Advantage and Edification of the *Body of Christ*.

I doubt there be some, and those no
ir-

inconsiderable ones, that believe this doctrine not *sufficiently* asserted by the *Church of England*, there being in the Frame and Contexture of her *Church-Government* too much of the *Lay*, and too little of the *Clergy-man*. And though my Judgment tells me, that there is not any *Civil Magistrate* on earth, be he *Emperour, King, or Prince*, that hath so *Evident* and *Immediate* a *Commission* for his *Power*, and the *Exercise* thereof, as hath the *Church*; yet who sees not, that both the Administration and the Administrators of this Government are *despised*, save in such a *subordinate* way of dispensing this *Power*, that must needs render it *precarious* in the eyes of ignorant men, and the *Church-Officers* themselves; no other things but such *borrowed Hands*, as by *pulling* now this way, now that way, help to keep the carriage of the *Civil State* from *overturning* in rough and dangerous *Descents*.

E OBJECTION

OBJECTION IX.

But you say, That could you have believed the point of Sacerdotal Absolution, and the Obligation (that seems to inferre) to private Confession; you had long since enjoyed your Peace, at least you had not felt so great a trouble as now you do.

SOLUTION.

14. **O**Ur Judgments now hit differ in this, for I clearly believe, that on earth, as there is no surer way to prevent mens falling into sin (especially many close Enormities) than the discreet and conscionable practice of the Duty of Confession: so is there not a more proper and undoubted way for allaying the Troubles of mind, flowing from the guilt of Sin, than a grave and considerate Execution of the Power of Absolving Sinners.

I say the power of absolving Sinners; for if this Clause in his Commission stand not good by Divine Right, I know nothing a Priest can do more than

than other men; and am well assured that in some part of their Office, they can do (many of them) much less. Not to signifie any thing of the grief I have, for your not believing so evident Texts of Scripture as this Doctrine is built upon; I shall endeavour to cut up your Infidelity in this point by the roots, by a very brief examination of these few particulars.

1. What the *power* of *Absolving* is.
2. Whether it be conveyed down to the *present Pastors* of the *Church*, in the ordinary way of commissioning them to that Function, by the *Imposition* of the hands of *Bishops* and *Presbyters*.
3. Of what *concernment* this *power* is, in the Execution thereof, upon Penitent Sinners.

1. The *power* of *Absolving* Sinners, is comprehended in one branch of the *power of the Keyes*, viz. remitting sin: expressly mentioned in Christ's Commission given to the Apostles and their Successors, *Matth. 16. 19.* and *Joh. 20. 23.* which in the point in hand, as it much differs from *readmitting* into the Church, (that part of the *power of the Keyes* which seems,

and doth but seem to be the same with this) so it is in a *Priest* or *Presbyter* (to my judgment) no *judicial*, but rather an *Annuntiative* act, the Priest being none of that order to whom the promise of our Saviour is made, *Matth. 19. 28. of sitting on twelve Thrones, and judging the twelve Tribes of Israel.* My reason for my opinion is, because a *Priest* cannot be thought to *Absolve* otherwise then he can *Retein* (else there will be more in one than in the other of the *Correlatives.*) Now a *Priest* doth not *retein* sin *judicially*, (for that is the office of the Bishop, and is only done by the sentence of *Excommunication*) but *declaratively* only, shewing the Impenitents (whether collectively, or personally) that by reason of such or such Impediments their sins are not forgiven; but not *binding* their sins upon them *judicially*; so that the Offender shall not only be obliged to repent, but also (as under the sentence of *Excommunication*) to *sue* for the removal of the Censure. Like as in the *Law*, one who is sued to an *Outlawry* for Debt, must as well procure the Writ of *Outlawry* against him to be

be *revers'd*, as take care to pay the Debt.

Neither do I by this, make the *pronouncing* of a Sinner absolved by a *Priest*, to be of no more efficacy than if a *Layman* had done it: for a power to *pronounce* or *proclaim* a Pardon in the name of a Prince, by virtue of a Commission issued out to one for that purpose, or by one to whose *office* it belongs so to do; is quite another thing, then the same Pardon *reported* by one, who hath no power and authority to *proclaim* the Prince's pardon.

But if I am thought by this to infringe the power and privilege of the *Sacerdotal* Function, and any way to lessen the Authority of that *Order*; I must speak my mind freely, I do not conceive that the same words in the *Ordination* of a Priest, do in the *Intention* of the *Church* signifie to the same latitude, as they did in the *Institution* of *Christ*, and therefore I believe a *Presbyter* or *Priest*, doth no more (but yet as much) in this point, as the *Church* hath invested him with in her *Ordination* of him to that Fun-

tion; which is the exercise of an Authority *limited*, as I have already said.

However this is enough for the Penitent, for if the Priest hath Judgment (which in Reverence to the Church, which hath had inspection of his abilities we ought to believe) to discern when the Penitent is pardonable, you cannot deny but he hath authority committed unto him, in God's Name, and from his Word, to let the Penitent know, not only that he is pardonable, but that God will undoubtedly pardon him, and all such as he is, in case of their perseverance in their Repentance.

2. As for the second thing proposed, *viz.* whether this power be so conveyed down, &c. it is strange, me thinks; it should be any matter of scruple to you. For if you had not some prejudice to every thing that relates to pardon of Sin, I would ask you (and do verily suppose should go away without an answer) whether you believe a *Presbyter* hath power to consecrate the Elements in the blessed Sacrament, by virtue of this Ordination?

dination? and whether a *Lay-man* can do as much therein, if he should take the *Common Prayer-Book*, and read over the *Bread and Wine*, the *Form* of the *Consecration*? I know you believe the later as much as you believe the former. What hinders then, that this *branch* of power should not be conferred upon him in his *Ordination*? The Authority conferred upon the *Church* by *Christ* is the same in both, and both are by the Church (with due Limitation) invested on the *Presbyter* in his *Ordination*. And good reason it should be so, for I doubt not that the Sacrament ought (*regularly*) to be administered to none but *absolved* persons; as none were to eat the *Passé-over*, but those who were clean from all *Legal* pollutions. We see that the *Presbyterians*, and all other *Sectaries* amongst us, are so tender of this point, that they are so far from lessening the Authority of their Church-Officers in this particular, (or at least of the whole Church as they please to term it) that they are much more rigid and severe, in executing a power like this, *of their own making*, then ever the *Bishops*

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were,

were, in putting the *power Christ undoubtedly gave them*, in execution. But I need not say much of this second branch to one of your *persuasion*.

3. Lastly, If you desire to know what *advantage* this is to a Penitent? I answer, That if a Penitent do but believe as much of the Priests authority (though I shall be thought no very great Friend to the enlargement of it) as I have asserted, viz. an *Annunciative power* from God not onely to declare men *Pardonable*, (as he doth in preaching the Gospel) but to pronounce them *pardoned*, upon inspection of their Faith and Repentance, as he doth in giving them *absolution*, he shall not onely receive comfort, by the Priests assuring him of the safety of his condition, and of his *redintegration* into grace and favour with God; but shall enjoy the benefit of *his* prayers, whom God hath appointed to that Duty most especially, and whom he hath promised to accept: together with the *Blessing* of the Priest *Blessing* him in Gods stead as well as in Gods name;) a favour which nothing but some leud *Hophni's*, and *Phinees's* amongst the

the Clergy, *Numb.* 6. 23, 27. but multitudes of prophane *Esaus* amongst the *Layety*, could have had the skill or luck to have rendred so contemptible as we see it is, the punishment whereof (as likewise of *Despising* the Persons and Offices of such whom God hath appointed to serve at the *Altar of Blessing*, in many other particulars) both this present and many future unreformed Ages shall (as well as have some past times) undoubtedly bear, even to the *removal* of the *Golden Candlestick* from among them.

That thus a Priest is inabled to do, is clear from the *Form of Absolution*, appointed in the *Liturgie* of our Church to be used in the *Visitation of the Sick*, wherein as the Authority of the Church in that point, as also of the Priest, are plainly asserted, so is it matter of wonder, that so many *Legal* Protestants have such a slender respect for an important and necessary duty, it is not to be believed that either that *Power* of the Priest that *forms of absolution*, and the *Duty of Confession* are reserved to be huddled up in so troublesome an hour, and all the time of health past over without any inquiry

quiry into our *Accounts*: the Church injoyns it to be used then, but doth not forbid the use of it at other times. My Advice to you is, That if you desire the recovery of your own Peace of Conscience, you put this Duty in practise more frequently, and see that your Ghostly Father do his Duty in this and no other *Form of Absolution*, (I mean any of his own making) least by some *error* he may *seem* to do more then his power will permit him, or not do as much as the Church hath enjoined.

OBJECTI-

OBJECTION X.

You will say, perhaps) What settlement of Conscience by a Sacerdotal Absolution? seeing the Priest can but see with the eyes of a Man, and hath no Knowledge of my heart; which is so Deceitful, that it is a very great difficulty for any man to find it out, though it lodge in his own breast; and if he had knowledge thereof, yet is the Act but Ministerial, not Dispotical, and who knowes whether God will confirm it or no.

SOLUTION.

15. **T**He Priest *seeth but as man seeth*, but he may see what you see not, and judge better of what he sees, then every common person, seeing *the lips of the Priest do preserve knowledge*. If therefore he have understanding to discern and judge aright of what he sees, (as you must suppose he hath, else you will (at least) condemn your self of an unreasonable choyce) it is your business, to lay your

your Soul before him, and to acquaint him throughly, and truly, with your Condition: if you fail in this, (and consequently the *Act* be done under an error) the blame hereof will light on none but your self. And as for the knowledg of your wayes, there is no doubt but it St. *Paul's* Rule be true, though nothing else without us but God doth, yet the *Spirit of a man doth know the things of a man*, 1 Cor. 2. 11. and the heart may be *Emptied* to the very bottom, by such Rules as a judicious prudent and pious *Confessor* shall prescribe.

But in the later part of your Objection, I am sorry to hear any question made of Gods *Confirmation* of that due and necessary *Act* of *Absolution* made in His Name, and by vertue of a Commission derived from him. Any thing of this nature amongst men, would sound too infamous, especially if fix't upon such Persons who have the Power and Honour of *Giving Commissions* to other men. To question Gods faithfulness, is a sin of Infidelity, and he that hath promised under the Second Covenant, *he will remember our Sins*

Sins and Iniquities no more, Heb. 8. 12. i. e. of such as embrace the Gospel preach'd unto them.

14. To conclude my Answer fully to these *Two* last Objections, I suppose, that because we have no *visible bloody Sacrifice*, nor a *Most-holy* (on Earth) into which the *High-Priest* may enter with *blood* for his *own* and *our* Sins, it is therefore a matter of difficulty in your Judgment to be ascertained of the *way* of obtaining Pardon for Sinners under the Gospel; the means of doing it being so secret and invisible, and the Threatnings (in case it be not done) so open and terrible.

The Apostle tells us plainly, That *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*, Heb. 13. 8. which imports not only the *Immutability* of Gods accepting *Christ*, as the *meritorious* cause of Remission of Sins; but also the *unchangeableness* of that *Method*, whereby this Kingdom of *Christ* under the Gospel is administred. For this later, which most concerns your case, the Apostle tells you, *That Christ ever liveth to make intercession for us*, Heb. 7. 25. this being the most considerable

derable part of his Office in the administration of his *mediatory* Kingdom. This *Intercession* for us, *i. e.* the Church in general, and each one in particular, being his own *immediate Act* in Heaven, (and prefigured unto us by the High-Priests going into the *Most-holy*, once only in every year, *Heb. 9. 8.*) doth consist of *two* branches, because it supposeth that we have need of *two* things, *Justification* and *Sanctification*, therefore doth our *High-Priest* intercede with his Father for *two* things; for 1. *Pardon of Sin*, for 2. *Grace of Obedience*, or holy living; and these not *intermitted*, but *continued* Acts of *Intercession* for us, to the end of our lives, and for *all* unto the end of the world.

And this *Act* of *Christ's Intercession* for pardon is two-fold; First a *preventive act* of *Intercession*, (or rather the *beginning* of an *Act* continued to *higher degrees*) whereby *Christ* doth *intercede* with *God* for us, that the *Legal forfeiture* of our lives by sin, may not be taken immediately after the *Fact*; and also that *Grace of Repentance* may be given us: Of this nature I conceive
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that *Intercessional* Prayer of our Saviour, *Luk.23.34. Father forgive them, they know not what they do.* Where though the giving to such men Repentance be not exprest, yet is it (questionless) implied, because without Repentance they cannot be pardoned.

The *second branch* of this *Act* is a *subsequent mediatory act* of Prayer, or [*Plea*] with God (for so much the word *Advocate* will bear, (*if any man sin, we have an Advocate, &c.*) on the behalf of the sinner repenting; whereby Pardon is procured for him, upon Gods *Foresight*, that his Contrition and Repentance will be sincerely continued, by the vertue and efficacy of the grace of perseverance, which is interceded for by Christ, and obtained, upon the Penitents *using the former measure of assisting grace*; and this, as a blessing upon, and a reward of his sincere endeavours of obedience.

This later *branch* of *Christ's Intercession* for pardon, is that, whereby Christ the Mediator doth receive into his protection, the *humiliating acts* of a penitent Soul, *persuming the Tears*
and

and Prayers of such a one, with *clouds* of his own most precious *Incense*; and together with his *own*, offering them to Almighty God, as the fruits of his *former Mediation*, and an earnest of that enlargement of his *Church*, which, as it is the *travail of his Soul*, *Isai. 53. 11.* which he delights to see, so will it be the *joy of the holy Angels in the presence of God.*

16. Upon this *Intercession* of Christ, depends our pardon of Sin, and renovation by Grace: from *hence* it is, that all but *Apostates*, and such as cease not to *do despite to the Spirit of God*, by a continued presumptuous and malicious course of Sinning, receive a benefit apportionate to their several *Stations* and *Degrees*. And that you have no reason to think your self *rejected*, into the *fatal portion* of them, (being indeed the purchase of the sinner himself, thus cruel to his own Soul) who have no advantages, (nay not the greatest of all) by this *Intercession* of Christ: your Eyes fill'd with your Tears, and your Ears deafned with your own Sighs, your Hands so busie in distributing Alms, your Feet so

ſo active in viſiting the Sick, and your Knees made *callous* like the Primitive Saints) with frequent *Prayings*, are a ſufficient witneſs to your ſelf, and to all the world beſide.

OBJECT. XIII.

But you Reply. Did not Eſau ſeek the Bleſſing with Tears, and yet miſſ'd of it.

SOLUTION.

17. **B**UT I preſume you think St. *Paul* hath put this Objection into your mouth; but if you pleaſe to ſurvey the place in *Hebr. 12. 16, 17.* you ſhall find that this doth not reach you, unleſs you have at any time ſold the *Bleſſing* for a *meſs of pottage*, i. e. renounc't your intereſt in the Land of Promise, (the pretious Promiſes of the Goſpel,) for the enjoyment of that Plenty, Honour, Peace, &c. *the Pomps and Vanities of this wicked World*; I ſay renounc't your part and intereſt in the Merits and Mediation of Chriſt; and

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that not *indirectly* and *remotely* (as all who are guilty of *wilful Sins* in some measure do) but *orally scandalously* and *treacherously*; which (I presume) you will not forge, and charge upon your self; though your fancy hath a large *Shop*, and many *Tools* to work with.

Seeing then, that by vertue of that *preventional act of intercession*, (lately mentioned) you have not been cut off in your sins; but have *your life given unto you for a prey*; and withal, Grace for Repentance unto life, which like good *Physick*, by reason of a *mass* of *crude humors* in the Stomach) doth thus work somewhat violently in your Soul; why should you doubt that other *subsequent Act of Christ's Intercession*, whereby your pardon will be obtained? hath God pleasure in the death of him that dyeth? doth not he swear he hath not? *Ezek. 33.11.* and hath the *Divine Majesty* so far lost his credit with you, as not to be believed upon his Oath? Can he which is *Love it self*, not only scorn, but hate the Prostrations of a Sinner? that Sinner, whose eyes would be content to pour out Rivers of blood before
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the Throne of Grace, to obtain a Reconciliation with the offended Majesty of Heaven? even that Reconciliation which Himself *prayer from us men*, by the *Ambassadors* of his Holy Gospel, as St. *Paul* hath told us, 2 Cor. 5. 20. O do not thus struggle to deprive your self of your interest, and share in those merciful imbraces, which hasten to *meet*, and not fly from *Repenting Sinners*!

OBJECT. XIV.

But yet still, me thinketh, my Sins are such, as God cannot in Justice pass by; his Promises are too pretious to belong to me; more temperate Sinners, and such who have not so violenced the Law of God, and provok't his Long-suffering, may (doubtless) have the benefit of them: but as for me, why should not my Lot be with them, who but for ten times provoking were forever secluded the Land of Promise.

SOLUTION.

18. **Y**Our Charity is very commendable, that can make you believe so much for others, and so little for your self: but you should do well to remember, that the *Attributes of the Divine Majesty* may not be limited by us; not that I think any one so foolish, as to attempt it in respect of their *nature*, which is impossible; but in respect of their *effects*, which to do is sinful, they are infinite in their own nature, and must be so in our esteem: to say God cannot forgive your sins, is a sin against his power and justice; to say he will not (where he hath promised) is a sin against his truth and goodness. His goodness hath made him promise that he will do it; and that he might make this promise good, he hath provided a full *satisfaction* to his *justice*; and all this as much *before* us, as *without* us, and this limited as fully and as largely to you, as to any other Christian in the world.

This you cannot but see in that
most

most comfortable and full affirmation of the Apostle. *Heb. 2.9.* When he tells you plainly, that it was the design of God's Grace, *That Christ should taste death for every man:* and God so loved the World (saith St. John, chap. 3. 16.) *That he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

As for that Example of God's wrath upon the *Provokers*, (which you think doth so *neerly* concern you, because you have sinned willfully more than ten times,) you must give me leave to tell you, that you are very unfortunate in your application of Scripture; this Example not *reaching home* to your case, indeed *over-reaching* it more than *Jonathan's* third arrow did the Lad that fetcht the other two, *1 Sam. 20.* For the *Caution* given by the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, in that place, is, that they take care of *falling away* from the Gospel, upon temptations or persecutions; and so after the example of many already fallen from the faith of *Christ*, should become Apostates; whereby they might be sure that the Promises of the Gospel

should be no matter of advantage to them, because they should be as certain, *never* to enter into God's rest; as were those Provokers in the Wilderness, who for tempting God so often, were *finally* by God's *Oath* excluded from all hopes of entering into the Land of *Canaan*, their Carcasses falling in the Wilderness as the *Trophies* of God's vengeance upon them, for their infidelity of his power, and goodness, and promise.

This (I doubt not) doth clearly appear unto you, (unless you have engaged never to *repudiate* your *pregnant* Fancy, how *spurious* soever her Conceptions are) to be of no concernment to your case: who carry in your breast so many *witnesses* of your belief of the Gospel, especially the threatening part of it, that (as your posture is for the present) to fear your Apostacy from the faith of *Christ*; were an apprehension *too remote* from all excuses allowable even to persons of your *temper*.

OBJE.

OBJECTION.

Yet who knows but I may fall away? I am not yet perswaded that I shall be saved.

SOLUTION.

19. **T**Hough my Prayer to God for you is, That you may not be so perswaded *totally*, and *finally*; yet if any one should be so, it doth not therefore follow, that such a one is *fallen* from the faith of the Gospel: for the belief of this is so far from being a disbelief of the Gospel of Christ, that it is not so much a *direct disbelief* of any part of the Word of God; because God hath no where declared by *special affirmation*, that such a man shall be saved. But be it that you were perswaded that you should be saved, neither of these two things would follow thereupon; either *first*, therefore I shall infallibly be saved, or 2. I am assured that I shall never be an *Apostate*, because I *thus* believe; for what Text of Scripture doth affirm

this proposition, *viz.* he that is firmly perswaded that he shall be saved, shall never become an *Apostate*? or this, he that believeth he shall be saved, shall *infallibly* be saved?

In a word, had you an *Assurance* of your salvation *absolutely*, and *unconditionally* given unto you, by all the *Divines* in the World; yet was this but an *humane assurance*, and could amount to no more, but a testimony from men, the stability whereof would be as demonstrable as their own mortality, being the *evidence* of this Proposition [you shall infallibly be saved] is taken from the *Will of Gods purpose* concerning that man, to which *secret Will*, of the *Divine Majesty*, matters that concern *Gods prescience* do belong; though indeed the *conditional assurance* of any mans salvation, doth relate to his *revealed Will*.

OBJECT,

OBJECTION XV.

But doth not St. Paul tell us Rom. 8. 16.

That the Spirit it self beareth witness with our Spirit that we are the Children of God? *I want both these testimonies of my Adoption, that of the Spirit of adoption, and that of mine own Spirit witnessing that I am a Child of God: surely then my condition is not such as it ought to be, and as I desire it should be.*

SOLUTION.

20. **T**Hat this Epistle of St. Paul (and especially the 7th, 8th, and 9th Chapters) hath in it some things that *are hard to be understood, those Esau, and Jacob-like contests in the Bowels of the Church about the meaning thereof, do sufficiently witness: I pray God that we may all of us, in the heat and animosity of our disputes, have an eye to that example of admonition St. Peter menrions of those in his times, who being unlearned and unstable, did wrest those and other Scriptures*

Scriptures to their own destruction, 2 Pet. 3. 16.

But *I am perswaded better things of you, and such as accompany salvation.* And therefore to give you a full and tender account of your Objection, I conceive it consists of 3. branches.
 1. You suppose that every Child of God hath *testimony* that he is such.
 2. That the Scripture asserts the *testimony* to be *twofold*; one the *testimony* of the *Spirit of adoption*; the other, the *testimony of his own Spirit*: And
 3. that you *want* both these, and therefore *hastily* conclude that you are not the Child of God. To these I shall answer directly thus:

1. I do affirm with your supposition, that every Child of God hath *testimony*, or *witnesse*, that he is such. I shall give you but one place for all, 1 Joh. 3. 9. *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, i. e. he is such a one as keeps a sincere Eye upon himself in respect of all, especially of deliberate sins.*

2. In the Second, I am likewise of your judgment, that this *testimony* is the *testimony of the Spirit of adoption*,
 and

and of his own *Spirit*; but whether it be necessary that a Child of God have *both these testimonies*, giving the like full and *joynt evidence* for his Sonship; and therefore till such *full and joynt-evidence* be given to him, he *really* is not (and therefore ought not to repute himself) a Child of God, is more then matter of doubt with you, having (it seems) indissolvably espoused the negative part. But I doubt you do not rightly apprehend what the Apostle doth mean by [*the self-same, or the Spirit it self bearing witness*] with our Spirit, to me he seems to mean one, or rather all of these 3. things; either 1. The Witness of Scripture (which is the *testimony* of the Spirit of God) that such as believe in *Christ Jesus, i. e.* receive him as their Priest, Prophet and King, are infallibly adopted into Gods *Paternal Relation to Christ Jesus, the adoption by Grace*, as truly interressing those believers in Gods Paternity, as doth the *Divine Nature* Christ himself, according to that of St. John, Chap. 1. 12. *As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the Sons of God, even to them*
that

that believe on his name, and this testimony have all the Sons of God, or all true Believers. Secondly, it may signifie the *economy* of the Gospel in opposition to that of the *Jewes*, whose state or condition, was that of Servitude; as ours under the Gospel is a state of Freedom: they Servants, we Sons: they full of the *Spirit* of bondage, engendered from *Sinai*, we filled with the *Spirit* of adoption, flowing from *Sion*, Gal. 4. 25. a sufficient evidence whereof is the divers *Methods* that God hath made use of, in delivering the *System*, or Rules of either dispensation unto both People. A Third sense may be this, the Apostle may intend by the *Testimony* of the *Spirit* in Gods Children, that *Inclination* and *duct* of *Obedience* which Gods Children do, (though not all of them in the *same* measure) feel in their hearts, sweetning their natures, and bringing them gently to a compliableness with the Precepts of the Gospel, and a putting their Necks most willingly into the *Yoke* of *Christ*, his *Commandments* being no whit grievous to them, 1 Joh. 5. 3. like as the yokes are very troublesome

some to Beasts not accustomed there-
to; (as the Prophet speaks of the Jews,
*Jer. 31. 18. I was chastised as a Bullock
unaccustomed to the yoke;*) but to such
whose necks have been used to draw
in them, yokes are no way dreadful,
or troublesome. In the first of these
senses, the word *Spirit* must be taken
personally, for the Third Person in the
ever Blessed and Glorious *Trinity*: In
the second it must be taken *tropically*,
the word not signifying in the natu-
ral and proper sense thereof, but yet
not without example, *Rom. 8. 2. 2 Cor.
3. 6. Gal. 4. 29.* In the third sense it
must signifie *metonymically*, the effect
of the Spirit being called by the name
of him that works that blessed effect
in the Souls of Gods Children.

In the first and second of these Sen-
ses, the *Testimony* of the *Spirit* is com-
municated to all true Christians; but
in the third I know lyes the ground
of your Exception: but because I shall
have occasion to speak somewhat af-
terward directly to this Point; be
pleased for the present to remember,
that I have told you, that this inclina-
tion to obedience, the duct of the
Gospel

Gospel is not alike efficacious upon all the Children of God, this Spirit being not given in the same measure to all the Sons of God.

As to the third Branch of your Objection, (rather but one part of it) *viz.* the want of the *Testimony* of your *own* Spirit, that might *witness* (together with the *other*) that you are *the Child of God*; to give full satisfaction therein, we must inquire into 1. the meaning of the word [Spirit] in this place. 2. What the *Testimony* thereof is. And of 3. what *Authority* in a business of this Importance the *Testimony* of a mans *own* Spirit is.

For the first; The word [Spirit] in this place must signify (I conceive) one of these two things: either first, some *noble* and *sublime* Essence, presiding in a Christian, either as a *distinct substance* from that, which is one of the *essential constitutive principles* of every man; or else as the *Celestial* and more *Seraphical* part of the Soul, *informing, ordering, and governing* the Rational faculties in all *Spiritual* and *Divine* things. And in this sense it must be conceived to have some Resemblance

semblance with the office of the *Imaginative* faculty ; which being seated betwixt the *outward* senses and the *Understanding*, conveys the *Species* of all *sensible* objects to the *Intellectual* faculty, being it self of a middle nature, betwixt *rational* and *sensible*. To one of these *senses* (I judge) those *Divines* referre their opinions, who assert man to consist of 1. *Spirit*, 2. *Soul*, and 3. *Bodie* : unless by [*Soul*] in this *tripartite* division, they understand an *Essence* capable of no other offices in Man, but the performance of *sensitive* and *vegetative* operations. Or 2^{ly} the word [*Spirit*] in this place may signify (and methinks not at all incongruously) some *excellent gift* of the Holy Ghost, *infused* from above in our Baptisme, into the Souls of Christians, whereby they are not only made capable of *receiving divine Revelations*, and things *above Reason*, but likewise inclined, and encouraged in the performance of all those things which God requires at their hands, to render them capable of obtaining the further inestimable degrees of his Love and Favour to Mankinde. And there-

therefore 2ly. the *Testimony* of any mans *Spirit*, is that *Evidence* which it gives concerning the whole *Series* of his conversation, in reference to those principles of Faith and Obedience which God hath given him, in his *revealed Will*, as the Grounds and Rules of his Practice. The third *Authentickness* of which *Testimony* doth manifest it self to every man, *partly* by the *known truth* of the things attested, which are not concealed from him, but represented as the things of *himself*; and *partly* from that power which God hath over it, not only in rectifying any Errors thereof, but likewise in shewing himself merciful toward us, in such things, wherein such a *Testimony* is not *for*, but *against* us. This *Testimony* you (say you) want, because you find not any *Witness* in your self that you are a Child of God.

I conceive it is not impossible for your *Spirit* to give this *Testimony*, though you have *deafned* your Ear to it, and take it for some deception of flesh and blood, or a delusion of Satan, using all the *Devices* he can, to insnare you

you in carnal security: but whether it be thus or no, I shall advise you to endeavour to *elicit* and call up this Testimony by that which is the *Test* of it: *Do you continue in any wilful course of deliberate sin? What know you by your self? Are you still guilty of any of those sins which in the judgment of the Apostle render a man incapable of any inheritance with the Children of God?* If you are, then look not for this *Testimony* till you have repented, and amended your life; nor *then* neither for it *presently*. until such time as you have good *experience* of your Resolutions, how they have held out in the time of Tryal and Temptation, and that the greatest and sharpest that in all likelihood may happen unto you. But if you are not thus guilty, (as for my part I believe you are not) of any *mortal* sin reigning in your body; go to the *Rule* with this Argument in your mouth: The *Holy Spirit of God* saith, *Whosoever is born of God doth not sin* [wilfully and deliberately] *Joh. 3. 9.* But upon a strict survey of my self, I find that I do not commit any such sin. Therefore I am *born of God*.

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Upon the Truth of the *middle* Proposition depends the validity of this *Testimony* of your *Spirit*; for the *major* is infallible, and the *Conclusion* is undoubtedly true, upon supposition that there be no such sin, either of omission or commission, in your conversation, which may exclude you from your Sonship: But yet for as much as the Apostle doth tell us, that *though he knew nothing by himself, yet was he not thereby justified*; we ought in reason to lay no more weight on this disquisition and search of our selves, than it will bear: for our *Knowledge* being *imperfect*, this search and enquiry into our own wayes cannot be absolutely perfect: and consequently we subject to errors therein: yet is it most certain, that if we do it in sincerity of heart, without partiality to our selves; not only, not allowing in our practice any the smallest sin, but by deeds of Mortification, earnestly and faithfully endeavouring to subvert the power of it; we have the *Faith* of the *Divine Majesty* to rely on, in the Tenour of the Gospel, not exacting *unsinning* obedience under

der pains of eternal death, from those who shall be reputed, and rewarded as the Children of God.

OBJECTION XV.

But if I were a Child of God, I cannot but in reason expect a more compliable temper with the Laws of Christ, than I find in my self: even to those things, from which I actually do abstain, I perceive in my self most violent, and strong inclinations; so that I have no comfort from the Victory over my Lusts; such murmurings and regrets I have in my self, for not letting loose the Reigns of my corrupt Nature.

SOLUTION.

21. **M**Y Answer to this Objection will likewise discharge your expectation of what I promised more fully to speak, in reference to that (supposed) exception you would have against your self, from the third sense I suggested unto you, which

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the Apostle might intend, by the *Testimony* of the *Spirit*, in that of the *Romans* lately mentioned.

It is not to be denied by any the *Greatest Saint* upon Earth, but that he feels in himself the *Contests* of two contrary Principles, *Flesh* and *Spirit*, the *old* and *new man*: and evident I presume it is, that from hence arises very much of their trouble who have tender and good Natures, but weak and disordered Judgments. For *first*, many of those Christians do conclude, that all, even the *first motions* to sin, which they feel in themselves, how *suddenly*, and *impetuously* soever rejected by their Spirits, do yet leave some *dangerous guilt* sticking upon their Consciences. And secondly, that the state of a Christian lyable to such *motions* against the Law of God, springing from *corrupt* Nature in him, is wholly deplorable and forlorn; these being most sure marks of his unregeneracy.

Concerning the *first* of these; though there be many very Judicious and Pious *Divines*, that are of a contrary Judgment, acknowledging no more
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in these *motions* to sin, than an *infelicity* accompanying the Nature of the holiest men in this life; affording indeed matter of humility to all the Children of God, but not aspersing them with any guilt: yet if your Judgment run along with those of the *other persuasion*, I shall not Endeavour to alter your opinion; it being long since imbibed (I believe) and therefore not only difficultly changed, but almost impossible to be clearly eradicated out of your mind; and consequently, may be a means not of lessening, but enlarging your Troubles: yet would I desire you to retain your own Perswasion, with this *grain of Salt*, viz. That those *Motions* are but sins of *Infirmity* and *Venial*, which have pardon of course under the Gospel to all the Children of God; it not being possible that they can live in the Flesh, without such *Motions* to sin, unless you will suppose them capable of living in a state of *Impeccability*, a *not-sinnable* condition in this World; for that such *Motions* must in reason be supposed to be in all persons *lapsible* (as was *Adam* and all his

Sons,) being that *indeliberate* sins, as well as sins of a *slower fermentation* in mens Souls, must be preceded by such *Motions* of their Appetites, as *naturally* and as *necessarily*, as the collision of Flints must be before the *emission* of fire.

As for the second, such *Motions* as these how vile and irregular soever they are, (*Blasphemies* having the same *mint* with *Fornication*, *Adulteries*, *Murders*, as our Saviour telleth us, *Matth.* 15. 19.) yet being (as we have said) *immediately*, and with *Indignation* rejected by us, are no marks of an unregenerate Man, but rather the contrary: For do not we Christians engage in a *warfaring* life against the *Flesh*, the *World*, and the *Devil*? Is not the *Holy man*, he that leads a *Virtuous* and *Religious* life, a *Conquerour*? And is there a *Conquerour* where there is no *Enemy*? Have we *weapons*, spiritual ones, put into our hands, to *beat the Air* withal? Are not these *Motions* the *enmity of the Flesh*, which we are engaged to oppose and destroy, that *Avalek*, with which we *must have war for ever*? I mean whilst we live
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in this World. And must it pass for a *Character of Treason* or *Cowardice*, (and not rather a note of *Infelicity*) to be daily surrounded with multitudes of these *Philistims*, which yet (like *David*) a valiant Christian destroyes by *Ten thousands* at a time? If this be that *Shibboleth*, and *Test* of discerning and distinguishing the good from the bad, Heaven will be filled with none but Angels, and those innocent Creatures, whose good hap it was to dye whilst their ignorance of Good and Evil (like the Children of the *Ninevites*) might give them undeniable pretensions to the Crown of Glory.

Should you therefore condemn your self, for that such *Duels* and *Battels* as these are daily fought in your Breast, for that *Plots* and *Conspiracies* against the Kingly Government of your Appetites, are daily detected and prevented; the *Plotters* and *Conspirators* subdued, chastised, and kept under by an high hand; should you, I say, condemn your self for this, you would in that sentence condemn *the Generation of Gods Children*; the main difference betwixt *spiritual* and *carnal*

Men and Women lying in this, (not that one sort *feels* no contest with *Motions* to sin, the other have Souls daily clouded and *pestred* with such *Locusts*) *Gal. 5. 16.* but one of them, *viz. spiritual* Men do conquer and subdue, but *carnal* Men and Women do yield to, and are vanquish'd by these Lusts.

Honour and Commendation are not only *due* to Fortitude, but do foment and cherish that Virtue: take you heed therefore that that be not appliable to you, which the valiant and wise *General* of King *David's* Army foretold him upon his *sowre* entertainment of his Souldiers, after their Victory over *Absolom* (the Kings *Darling* as much as *Enemy*.) *2 Sam. 19. 7.* You ought to encourage your self in God, and blest and praise him by whose Grace it is that you are thus *victorious*, and that *for the praise of his Glory*, as the Apostle doth more than *once* intimate in *Eph. 1. 12, 14.*

OBJECTI:

OBJECT. XVI.

But how then is my Nature changed, where is that new Creature, created after God in Righteousness and true Holiness? What Renovation by the Spirit, if such Motions to Sin as these, croud in upon the Soul of a regenerate Christian? I cannot but be perswaded it was much otherwise with the Apostles, and is so still with Holy men, though not with me.

SOLUTION.

22. **T**He *Anatomy* of every, or any single Christian's Soul, with the true state and posture of his Mind you cannot *certainly* know, unless the person may be presumed, not only to speak truth, but thoroughly to understand his own condition in this point, even as *St. Paul* did. But certain enough it is, that Holy men extraordinarily inspired by God, have grievously complained of the guilt of Sin, and of their exceeding great troubles for it, even to distraction, *Psal. 88. 15.*
neither

neither of which could possibly happen unto them, (the later being the fruit and effect of the former) with these *precedaneous motions to sin*.

Besides, let the Thoughts, Words, and Deeds of the holiest person which you would instance in, be *sifted* to the bottom, and some *bran* will be found in them, some *chaff* will be winnowed out of the *heap* of his conversation; even since that time, that he hath had some comfortable assurance of his good Estate: but all this is not only tryable by experience, but by Rules and Grounds of Divinity, which have proportion with the *Analogy* of Faith.

23. The *New Creature*, or the *Regenerate* man who doth sincerely endeavour *to perfect Holiness in the fear of God*, doth not pass into this estate, by any *Physical* and *Natural*, but by a *Spiritual* and *Moral change*; the principles of Motion and Operation in him, continuing not only the same, but still liable to the same Errors in working as before; otherwise (as we have already said) his state must be a state of *Impeccability*, which was never

ver in our Earthly Tabernacle but once, when *Christ Jesus* took our Nature upon him: in-whom, though the humane Nature was *lapsible*, because otherwise he had not been *made in all things like unto us, Sin onely excepted*, Heb. 2.17. (which *lapsibility* is not,) yet by reason of the *hypostatical* union of the Humane and Divine Nature in his *Person*, he could not only not fall, but feel no Motion to the least sin, *neither was Guile found in his mouth*.

So then, by reason the faculties in the Soul remain the *same*, after, as before Conversion, (as that man doth *will* Virtue with the same *Individual will*, wherewith before he did *will* Vice: he doth *love* God with the same natural power of *affecting*, wherewith before he loved the World.) It must follow, That the Soul and her Appetites, as well *concupiscible* as *irascible*, being still Physically the same; the change is only in these 3. things especially, the 1. *cause*, 2. *manner*, and 3. *end of their operation*. The *Moral* cause, (if I may so term it) by the efficiency whereof
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the Will and her Appetites are in a Regenerate man moved to *act*, upon the propofal of any object, is that *Tincture* of Grace, which is caſt into the Soul by the Bleſſed *Spirit* of God: which is a kind of *Principium motus & quietis* in Moral, as *Nature* is in things Natural, mingling it ſelf into every faculty of the Soul, apprehending in the *Intellectual*, willing or nilling in the *Elective* power, governing and guiding the Affections in all their Operations, both of averſation and deſire, being ſo perfectly *aſſimilated* to the nature of the Soul, that (as is the Soul in which it dwells) Grace is better apprehended by her operation in Regenerate men, than defined in its eſſence: ſomething there is that moves them to Act, not only ſo *contrary* to others, but even to themſelves whilſt unregenerate, *Rom. 6. 21.* (as the contrary effects of *Glory* and *Shame* in the ſame *Persons*, flowing from the ſame Acts, though under a different ſtate doth evidence) but to define what this is, whether a *ſubſtance* or a *quality*, whether an *Act*, or any *Aſſiſtant form*, may (poſſibly) appear a difficulty

difficulty so much the greater, by how much the more solidly it is enquired into.

As for the *manner* of a Regenerate man's working by Grace, it is *regular*, according to that order which God himself hath fixt in our Nature, *Reason* being the Judge of all our Actions, uncorrupted by any prepossession, passion, or interest, which are the causes of all *disorderly* Actions of the Soul, invading by force or Stratagem, the more *noble* and *rational faculties*, whereby Unregenerate men are carried (*vertiginously*) about with divers Lusts, as well as with every *wind of Doctrine*, Eph. 4. 14. which is a lust in the Understanding, and so the more dangerous, as are Diseases that fix themselves in the *vital* parts; and in *circular* motion, we know that each part of the Orbe hath a vicissitude of Superiority: but in the Soul of man Reason ought to be fixt in the highest seat, the deepest *Mysteries* of Faith no way deposing this *Queen Regent* from her Dignity, but only exacting from her that *Homage* and *Fealty* which is due to *Divine Revelations*, and the
Assistances

Assistences of the *Spirit* acting herein spiritual and heavenly things.

And lastly, for the change that is wrought in the *end* of a Regenerate man's Actions, that which he now *ultimately* and chiefly aims at, is the manifestation of God's Glory: and the *subordinate* end of all his Endeavours, is his own, and the salvation of other mens Souls: but with men of unchang'd Natures, as *Nature* in a state of Corruption is the Principle from which they work, and their Manner wholly *enormous*; so is their *end* ever their *self*, even in that worse sense, wherein an obedience, and captivity to all, or some kinds of carnal Lusts, for satisfaction of the unreasonable and brutish part in them is signified, in opposition to that *manual* of Gospel-Duties, (as I may call it) abridged into that most comprehensive *Notion* of Self-denial.

Briefly then, if you will but observe the Principal *efficient* of your moral Actions, the *manner* and *end* of doing them, I trust you will be able to see so great a contrariety betwixt those of the Unregenerate, and Regenerate.

generate life, that you will without any just cause of doubt as freely assert the *spiritual Life* you lead, from the vigour and *energy* of that *New Nature* in you ; as you do the *Natural life* you live, by the power of the *Old Nature*, in a *Physical* sense.

OBJECTION XVII.

But me thinketh [say you] I may and ought to be a much better Christian than I am.

SOLUTION.

24. **N**O Moral duty (like *Mathematical proportions*) doth consist in an *indivisible* point. That which we judge to be the worst may yet be worser ; and that which we take to be the best may yet be better, if done by any Creature not *impeccable*. *Eschue Evil, and do Good*, is the Rule of *holy living*, *Psal.* 34. 13. which he that sincerely doth, needeth not be *scrupulous* and critically inquisitive into every single Action of his Life, though

though he may not be remiss and supine in doing any the most inconsiderable, *whilst it is in doing.*

25. There is no *Divine*, that will assert the necessity of perfect and unfinning obedience under the Gospel: his own experience without the Authority of Saint *John*, will confute such *Magisterial Theologie*, e're it run from a pen, held by a hand of flesh and blood. All humane Actions must needs carry a proportion to the nature of the *Agent* by which they are effected: in all Moral Actions, the *intermediate Agent* betwixt the *Spirit of sanctification*, and the *material part* of the Action is the *Soul* of Man, in which, and by which, as by a natural and voluntary Instrument, the *Blessed Spirit* doth work: so that all *Moral productions* must needs receive some impressions from the next, and immediate cause of their being: an Artificer never so skilful, yet the defects and ineptitude of the Instrument by which he works, may somewhat abate of the excellency of the work, unless he can suppose the *Soul* of Man
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in all her faculties to be not only *regular*, but *inerrable*; that transpiercing Eye will find some *flaw* in the most orient Moral Action, which a state of Separation and Bliss might have rendred that Action free from; our very Prayers and Praises are (undoubtedly) not so perfect in this, as in the other life: And this is one reason, why till the day of Judgment *Christ* doth not *deliver up the Kingdom to the Father*; his *Melchisedekian Priesthood* continuing in (my opinion) till that time, both for the Quick and Dead, that they may have their *Perfect Consummation* and bliss in everlasting glory: this the *Church* prays for, and for what the *Body* prays, the *Head* doth undoubtedly *intercede*.

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OBJECTION

OBJECTION XVIII.

But me thinketh (say you) I may do more good than I do.

SOLUTION.

26. **C** Concerning the Measure of Well-doing, if it were in Moral positive Precepts of God's revealed Will, there needs nothing more be said, but that of our Saviour, *These ought to be done, Matth. 23. 23.* But because such Doubts or Scruples, that afflict your mind, are most likely to arise from those duties, which are prescribed only in gross, but the *Quotum* or measure left to our own prudence to determine, as Fasting, Prayer, Alms, &c. I shall onely insist upon these, there being no tolerable doubt or scruple to be made concerning the other, which oblige *ad semper*, at all times, and in their full measure.

But you must take notice, that it is not possible that particular Rules and Directions can be given to all Christians, concerning these Duties, where-

whereby all objections may be prevented: somewhat may be said in general, which may serve so far to direct you, and all good Christians, concerning these duties, that by observing them you may be left secure from all *damnable omissions* of any of these duties, and from any *dangerous errors* in performing them. *Fasting* is a duty when enjoined by publick lawful Authority, and for Christian ends, and to be performed in a charitable manner, is an indispensable duty upon all, save such, with whom that Authority doth *actually* dispense, or may *duly* be supposed to be dispensible by such an Authority. But for *private Fasts*, how frequently they are to be observed by every one, cannot be defined without some regard had to our constitution of Body, our calling, the usual Contingencies of necessary affairs, &c. which may hinder the performance, or make it impertinent to our end. *Publick Fasts* are less lyable to errors in the performance, than *private* are: one Reason amongst others is, because the management of every one for that time,

is for the greatest part left under *publick* circumstances of *Time, Persons, Place, &c.* which render the Duty more free from error and scruple in the Performance. *Private Fasts* are seldom free from private faults and inconveniencies. Now because the circumstances of Complexion, Age, Sex, Contingencies, &c. are so variable; my Judgment is, that few Christians oblige themselves by Vow, (but under a pecuniary mulct to the poor they may) to the observation of weekly, voluntary Fasts, making those the choicest opportunities, when they are most fit for those duties. The best conjuncture is *Prayer, Fasting, and Alms* together, (or in those who have no *corporal Alms*, some *spiritual Largeſſ* to the Souls of others, which all may give) these set a price upon the Service of God, and keep our Religion from being *cheap and refuse*, and such as *costs us nothing*, but the expence of a little time and breath.

But by this I desire not to be thought to discharge the *weekly dayes* of *abstinence* appointed by the *Church*, or to *commute* for them, by the observation of
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of a day of your own; for I look upon the Authority of the *Church* you were Baptized in, as *uncancell'd* in point of obliging you, and all others, who call your selves the *Sons* and *Daughters* of the *Church of England*.

These Cautions I shall recommend unto you, and others, in reference to the matter in hand. 1. The duties of our honest and necessary calling, (wherein men do undoubtedly serve God, when orderly and Christianly performed) may, though not wholly supersede, either out of our family, or private practice, any of these duties, yet moderate us in the practice of them. So much time spent in Prayer, cannot in reason be expected, from one that subsists by his *honest Calling*, as from him that lives of a *plentiful Revenue*. 2. Diversions and Recreations ought not to govern us in respect of these duties: but if they be such as require much of our time to the exercise of them (which I believe is not agreeable to Christian Principles) the seasons must not be robb'd away from these duties, but from something else, wherein we have a

power to dispense. I do not believe that an Hunting-Match, a City-Visit, or a Pack of Cards,&c. ought to exchange and alter the fittest, and usual times and hours for prayer, (though necessary employments, deeds of Mercy and Charity may) much less abbreviate or wholly dispense with the duty. 3. If it happen that there be an opportunity of doing some duty of Piety, (as publick Prayer or Sermon,&c.) in that place where you are enjoyn'd to be an Auditor and Member of the Congregation on the *Lord's Day*, (or in any other place where you are, in case there be no *Schism* in the *National Church*) you may not absent your self *only* for such Diversions and Recreations; the reason is, not onely for that a guilt of omission, and also a scandal will follow from thence, but you may lose an opportunity of doing, or receiving some good at that time, which you may not have tendred to you again. To lavish away ones time is a very great imprudence (besides a sin) in any Christian; but to lose *seasons* and *opportunities* is a very great piece of guilt, as well as folly. 4. In case

case you have bound your self to any of these, in respect of the measure and frequency, either by Vow, or promise, or firm Resolution (especially if by way of *Revenge* for former faults, 2 *Cor.* 7.11.) by all means, be as punctual as you may in the observation thereof: assuring your self, that as you shall meet with the more and greater oppositions after such Vow, Promise or Resolution, so you will find much more trouble upon the not performance of the duty so vowed, or resolved on; because the duty thereby becomes in its circumstances to the *hic* and *nunc* of it, of the nature of Gods unchangeable Precepts, and the sin of unfaithfulness is added to the omission of that duty by you.

5. You need not scruple the *Condition* or *persuasion* of the Person to whom you give in bestowing of your *Alms*; if you perceive the Receiver thereof be such; as by honest endeavours cannot provide for himself, and his Family in a way proportionable to the Dignity of mans Nature, you have a good aim to hit the mark of Charity; if nothing be probably suggested

to the contrary, you may safely suppose any one that asketh, capable of your charitable Benevolence. 6. In giving ever have regard to that your Eye informs you, the poor Wretch stands most in need of, and which others are not so likely, or so well able to supply, as your self. I need not mention to you any caution against *vain glory*, the *forfeiture* of your Reward in *Heaven*, upon our Saviour's own caution against it, will be your daily Remembrance thereof. 7. To constant Prayers and other holy Duties in your Family, though there be no Positive command in Scripture for it, I believe you hold your self obliged. Yet would I not have you so wedded to any *form*, as not being able to please your self therein, you should wholly discharge the Duty it self, that which best opens your Wants as a Christian, and cometh home to the *concernments* of your own Family, is the most proper, and in all likelihood may best suit with the *temper* and *perswasion* of every Person in your House; which in this Age we live in, may not be so unanimous, as you desire.

fire. 8. In the performance of any of these (as of all other Duties) labour to shew your self of an *alacrious Spirit*. For being they are Free-will-Offerings, (at least many Acts of them may be so) it is true in all the rest, which the Apostle speaks of *one* of them, *God loveth a chearful giver*, 2 Cor. 9. 7. 9. I shall conclude with this caution, (which I desire you to make use of as a *Cordial*, and not as a *Conserve* to make other things *glib* and *palatable* in swallowing) remember that there is great difference betwixt the certain punishment annex't to the breach of Law, and a lesser degree of Glory in the life to come, he that *soweth* plentifully, shall *reap* plentifully, 2 Cor. 9. 6, 7. though where there is no sowing at all, no *Harvest* (in Justice) can be expected; yet where there is this spiritual *sowing*, the *crop* shall be *answerable* to what is sown. Though it should be every mans design, to aim at the *highest degree* of Glory, and yet believe that he deserves not the least: yet I would have such as are of your *sad temper* to consider, that there is no danger incurred, by being only capable

capable of receiving a less reward than other men.

OBJECT. XIX.

But I think my self bound in Conscience to do the most and best I may, and therefore I condemn my self of sin, as oft as I fail of doing that which is best.

SOLUTION.

27. **Y** Our condition may be such, as that you may be utterly incapable of doing that which is *best*; and consequently you ought not in reason to think your self bound to all that is *best*. A single life is *best*, in comparison of Wedlock, (supposing the Person qualified for Cœlibate:) yet if you are entred into the state of Marriage, (though you found your self capable of living without Lust or *burning*) yet you must now content your self with that state of life, and *therein abide with God*, 1 Cor. 7.24. doing the Duties agreeable, and proper
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to that *kind* of life. But you mean (perhaps) of such things as are yet in your choice; as to Pray in *Canonical* hours, as do the *Regulars* or *Religious* of the *Roman Perswasion*; or to give so much Alms, as may *quadruplicate* the proportion you have hitherto given, being able *so* to do. I confess I do not take it to be a fault, but a piece of *Heroical* Charity, if any one doth by this means, so lessen himself, in respect of his former quality, that the *Place* and *Dignity* he formerly enjoyed as his *Civil Right*, (provided he be no *publick Magistrate*, which (perhaps) may alter the Case) the *Port* and *Equipage* of his living is thereby deprest, and made *inglorious* in the eyes of *worldly* men. But as I take this to be no fault, but much otherwise; so I must take leave to scruple your scruple you raise from your *private* belief in this point; *viz.* that you are *obliged* thus to do, because your Conscience tells you, you are capable of doing it. Your Argument stands thus; *Such an Heroical piece of Religion I am capable of performing, therefore my Conscience tells me I am bound to perform it.*

Two

Two things must here be enquired into. 1. *Whether my capacity of doing that which I am not apparently commanded to do, be a sufficient ground to infer my obligation thereto?* In case this be not so, *Whether 2. my belief that it is so, hath a power of obliging me thereto?* as in matters of *Indifferency*.

That the *first* Proposition cannot be held for an *universal Affirmative*, may be clear to any one, from these two Instances: 1. There be divers persons in the World, that are capable of performing the *Ministerial Function*, in point of *Parts* and *Moral Behaviour*, which yet never did conceive themselves, nor any body else believe, that they were *indispensibly* bound, by this *aptitude* of theirs to enter into *Holy Orders*. I must confess, that in the first Plantation of the Gospel, or in an intolerable scarcity of Ministers, the case may (possibly) be otherwise; especially if such persons perceive in themselves an *unusual acquisition*, and *improvement* of their abilities, under common means; and a greater *violence* and *stirring of Spirit* in them toward that Profession, (especially if
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under persecution, or very slender encouragements to embrace it) together with the remarkable desires of others, that they would engage therein, (the *Concurrence* of which are very near to an *extraordinary Calling*.) But generally I conceive the case to be as is afore determined. Again, secondly, 'tis clear from 1 Cor. 7. That a single Life is better, in many respects, than Marriage: now if a Virgin living in her Fathers house, should find in her self *no necessity* to marry, but rather strong inclinations (and for the best reason of all, *that she might serve the Lord without distraction* by worldly business) to continue a Virgin, supposing she were *actually* obliged so to do, upon finding in her self this capacity of living unmarried, I desire to know, whether her Father (if he sees it *necessary* for himself, estate or Family that she should marry) may *compell* by his *Fatherly Authority*, such a one to accept of a fit Husband, tendered to her by her Father? on the one side here is the Command of a Father; on the other (on that supposition) the Command of God; this to abstain,

abstain, that to marry ; into what a sad perplexity will such a one be cast, if that supposition were true ?

But I desire him that holds the first opinion [*that his capacity of doing that which he is not apparently commanded to do, is a sufficient ground to infer his obligation thereto*] to consider this reason to the contrary: the capacity of doing any thing, whether *precedaneous*, *concomitant* or *subsequent* to the command, is no more than a *Qualification*, or *obediential power* and *passivity* in the object, by which the Law becomes *suitable* to the Creature, to whom it is given, and without which the Command can neither be *reasonable*, nor *just* : it being as disagreeable to *original justice*, that a Law or Command be given to any Creature *Superiour* to his abilities of keeping it ; as it is contrary to *ordinate justice* to punish that Creature, for the not performance of a Command so given. Not the *Obligency* therefore, but the *equity*, or *reasonableness* of the Law, is founded in the *Capacity* of the Creature to obey it (that being indeed founded in the *Sovereignty* of the Law-maker)

other-

otherwise there would be transgression, where there is no Law, contrary to the saying of St. Paul, *Rom.* 4. 15.

The main doubt behind is, *Whether a belief grounded upon such an aptitude, doth oblige that person in whom it is, to the performance of such things, for which there is no particular Precept given him by God?* and so may be understood to be of the same nature with that, which *Divines* call a *Personal Precept*, as was that of our Saviour to the young man, requiring him to sell all, and give to the Poor, *Luke* 18. 22. a Precept which *Divines* have hitherto held to be of the nature of those *Constitutions* in the *Civil Law*, called *Constitutiones personales*, *Inst. lib. 1. Tit. 2. n. 6.* none of which *transgreditur personam*, goes further than the person to which it is given, and therefore become not *Precedents* or *Examples* for others, though they have *Legis vigorem*, the force of Law, in respect of them to whom they are given.

Therefore I answer, That a Person that thus believes, is bound by his *erroneous* Conscience, or Judgment
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to the thing which he conceives himself thus capable of doing, but yet not irreveribly *bound*, as that man that receives a *personal* Precept from the Law-giver is, till the Law-giver himself be pleased to reverse it. He then that is thus *bound* by the error of his Judgment, in the first of those things controverted betwixt us, under this Objection, is freed from all Obligation to performance, as soon as his Judgment (or Conscience) is rectified; which is done as soon as he is perswaded of the truth of this Proposition, *viz. That the capacity of doing what is best, doth not render the Person capable obliged to do what is best.* Wherein (I think) the reason foregoing will give satisfaction to any *unprejudicate* Person.

OBJECTI

OBJECTION XX.

But doth not our Saviour discharge the force of your reason in Matth. 19. 12. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it; — But I am able to receive it, — therefore I am bound to receive it.

SOLUTION.

26. **Y**OU must prove, that our Saviour *enjoyns* that as a *Precept*, and not proposeth it as his *Advice* or *Counsel*; otherwise it cannot be thought to contain in it the *force* of a *Command*; and consequently hath not in it the *Obligatory* of a *Law*, but the *perswasory efficacy* of an *Advice*.

Now that those words do not contain the force of a *Precept* in them, will (I believe) be evident, if you consider the passage to which they are immediately related; and that is the saying of the *Disciples*, *vers.* 10. concluding Marriage to be (in point of *Prudence*) much worse than a single
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life,

life, in case there ought to be no divorce of Man and Wife, save for Adultery only. *It is not (say they) good to marry, if the case be thus*; which clearly implies thus much, that it is best in point of *Prudence*, (this being in every mans *choice*) not to marry; to which our Saviour's Answer is to this purpose, That they are in the right, if it were alike with all men in respect of abstaining from Marriage; but being it is not so, they that cannot contain ought to marry; but if a Man can contain, their Judgment is good, and is confirmed with our Saviour's own Resolution therein, it is best for him not to marry. I believe Saint *Paul* will give full satisfaction to this scruple, if you read his 7th Chapter, 1 *Cor.*

OBJECT.

OBJECT. XXI.

But is not every Christian bound in Conscience to use the things that God gives him, to the best advantage of his Master?

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SOLUTION.

27. **H**E is bound so to do in point of *prudence*, but not by any express *Law* given by God. Now the Obligation which *prudence* layes upon any man, is not in respect of such things as are *Good* or *Evil*; for therein is no *liberty* of Election, that which is *Evil* being by no means *eligible*: but only concerning such things as may be *well* or *better* done, either way of doing them *choosable* without guilt, because there intervenes no Law, which may *determine* my will, but I am left to govern my self by *prudential* reasons only, which amount to no more, but the *modification* of my *Act of choosing*, whereby it is resolved to be more or less *prudent*, not to be *lawful* or *unlawful*.

Now if I choofe that which is *leaft* to my own advantage, I do no more then what may be done, where the *election* of my will is not *predetermined*: and if that be *leaft* for the profit of my Mafter, yet he having given me no other Command, than to ufe thofe things *well* which he hath given me, I have obeyed his Commands who enjoyed me to do *fo* much.

If a Merchant fhould deliver a large flock of Goods or Money to his Factor, and fhould fay unto him, Imploy this to my beft advantage, in all instances and at every opportunity your *prudence* fhall judge to be fit: in this cafe the Factor is *preobliged*, and muft do only what is beft, elfe he breaks the Command of his Mafter. But if his Mafter fay thus unto him, Imploy this Stock to my *advantage*, and your reward for fo doing fhall be *proportionable* to the advantages I receive by your Endeavours: in this cafe the Factor is not obliged by his Mafters Command, to do any more than imploy his Mafter's Goods to his profit; which if he do, be it *much* or *little*, he obeys the Command of his Mafter, but
Prudence

Prudence binds him to do the *best* he can, for the advancing and improving his Masters Goods, because his own Reward will carry its *proportion* to that success, whether it be for the *better* or *no*, the case corresponds to the latter part of this illustration.

OBJECTION XXII.

But how can this stand with mine, (and the obligation of all Christians) to love the Lord, with all my Soul, with all my Mind, and with all my Strength.

SOLUTION.

28. **I** Do not conceive this *Paramount Law* inevitably infringed, by not doing *every* thing that we have ability of doing, but are not thereto expressly required by *Precept*. Indeed it binds the whole man to all Duties, exacted from him by God's *revealed Will*, and to submit to, or not withdraw my obedience therefrom, for any *Competitor* whatever, that may
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pretend

pretend claim to my *subjection*, because for that time, and in that thing, (if I were never so good a Christian) my Disobedience of God's Law, would unquestionably condemn me of not *loving* Him, *with all* my mind, *with all* my Soul, and *with all* my strength; the demonstration of which *Love* (as our Saviour himself resolves) is the keeping of *Gods Commandements*, Jo. 14. 15. if you mark it, the keeping his Commandements is the *Test* of every man's *love*, so that he that doth that; that observes what ever doth appear to be God's Commandement, is said truly to *love* God, and that *with all his Heart*. So that consequently there is left unto men a Latitude of expressing their *Love* to God, in some Acts of *Heroical* Virtue, proportionable to the *free-will offerings* amongst the *Jewes*; whereby God may have occasion given him, of *remunerating* such men according to his *Bounty*; like as the Duties performed agreeable to his Law, are *rewardable* by his *Justice*. You may take this Resolution of your scruple in this formal way of reasoning. The Love
that

that Christ requires from his Disciples is the Love of Him with all their Heart, with all their Mind, &c. But such a Love as this is exprest by keeping his Commandement. *Ergo*, The keeping of Gods Commandements is such a Love as God requires from his Children.

We may add hereto, That when a man doth sincerely propose the glory of God, as the *scope* and *center* of all his *Actions*, every single *Act* of his Life, whether *Civil* or Religious, may be interpreted as a *line* tending thereto; drawn from the *Circle* of his *first* Resolution, and cannot be truly said to be a breach of *Duty*, for that it tends *less* to perfection than doth *every* other Action of his Life; *gradual* Differences in *Moral* Actions, (as *good*, *better*, and *best*) making no *essential* difference in the Subjects in which they are: whereas the objects of Reward and Punishment, must be opposed by *contrariety*, as are *Virtue* and *Vice*, which diversity of Degrees in the same subject are not, as well in moral, as in natural Things.

So that without forfeiting your Reason you may believe, that you do not love the Divine Majesty *with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength*, because you do not every thing, which some *Eminent* Christians have done before you, as *giving all to the Poor, &c.* such *high* Attempts require *long sitting down*, and *considering* with your self, e're you engage in them; least not only that happen unto you, which betel the man in the Gospel, who beginning a *Building* too great for his Purse, *Luke* 14. 30. and desisting, was derided therefore by his Enemies, but a much worse thing, I mean the *irremoveable* anxiety of future life, with all the *vexatious scruples* that Satan, or a *volatile fancy* may cast upon your Soul.

OBJECT.

OBJECTION XXIII.

But I need not contest so hotly about the measure of holy and virtuous Actions. The Apostle tells me, that without Charity all is nothing worth: I cannot deny, but that I do heartily endeavour to do all the good that I may, to any one who stands in need thereof; but I have no assurance that I do it in Charity, and so all my Hay, Wood, and Stubble may perish, when it comes to the Test.

SOLUTION.

29. **I**T is no small difficulty to define what that Charity is, which you suspect you want. You accuse not your self of the neglect of any good Duty, that concerns the Bodies or Souls of men, and that as your Brethren and Partners with you in the common benefit of Redemption. You sincerely endeavour to practise forbearance, are patient and not revengeful of Injuries; kind, tender and compassionate; as sensible and zealous of other mens good as of your own; far from envying;

vying ; well-pleased at other mens happinesses ; hating all foolish elation of mind ; as also all pride and insolence, in over-valuing your self, and despising others ; you keep your self from using others unseemly ; either in Words or Gesture ; inclinable to take care of others Good and Safety, and not only of your own ; you fall not upon any provocation, into violent and immoderate distempers of Anger ; keep account of all the Good that hath been done by any, but none of the Evil ; you rejoyce not at the Errors and Sins of other men, but are passionately grieved for them, and contrarily made glad, by the good and holy conversation of your fellow Christians ; inclinable to conceal all the Evil that you know of another, so far as is for his Good, and not contrary to the greater Good of others ; you believe without prejudice all the Good you hear of others, or have Ground in Charity to believe of them ; You hope that you believe not, and never so far despair of their Repentance, as to give over using all probable means which may reclaim your wandering Brethren ; enduring much pain, trouble and loss, without Regret, for the recovering of such as are indangered by any unchristian practices. Now that
this

this is that *Charity* the Apostle so magnifies, you have not only the evidence of the thing it self, but the credit of a most *Learned, Pious, and Judicious Paraphrast* on that Chapter, whose very words I have transcribed (at least the full importance of them) for your satisfaction in this scruple: presuming that the authority of so Reverend a Person, will fix your Judgment beyond the *Assaults* of any ordinary *Temptations*.

I cannot therefore be so *ancharitable* to you as to joyn with you in a *Verdict* against your self, for want of *Charity*. I doubt not, but you have in your Heart this *Water springing up to eternal life*; though like *Hagar* almost dead by *thirst*, you want an *Angel* to shew you this *Fountain*, Gen. 21. When such fumes as these darken your Soul, do not seek for *light from sparks of your own kindling*; but from the *Sun of Righteousness*, that *Light that lighteth every one that cometh into the World*, Joh. 1. 9.

In a word therefore, you must know, that when the Apostle thus magnifies *Charity*, it is the same thing as to com-
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prize and exalt the *whole* duty of Man toward our Neighbour, in that one word ; and to prefer that before the *guifts* of *edification*, whether Tongues, Healing, Miracles, &c. the excellency and reputation whereof, or of any *Heroical* Action, as *giving ones Goods to the Poor*, or *ones Body to suffer Martyrdome*, is not comparable to that practical Virtue, in the full *latitude* thereof. And this cannot but be evident unto you, if you consider the comparison the Apostle makes betwixt Charity and such Gifts, in the 12, & 13 Chap.

OBJECT. XXIV.

But in all my Actions I endeavour to skrien my self from the wrath of God, and to prevent his Justice upon my person for Sin already committed, perfectly indeed abhorring it as the cause of all my Troubles, but not truly enamoured of Virtue (me thinks) because it yields me no such Harvest of Content and Felicity as the Heathens themselves could boast of.

SOLU.

SOLUTION.

30. **T**hat your *self* should be your *end*, as well as God, is not contrary to Piety; but your self must be put in a *second* and *subordinate* place, and God in the *first* and *chiefest*: because God being the *chiefest good*, and our Salvation *subordinate* to his Glory, as he is in this the *prime mover* of our Wills, (both *objectively*, and *efficiently*) so consequently must he be the *ultimate end* of our Actions.

But in this case we must distinguish betwixt *what* God *is*, and *what* we apprehend him to *be*: a Sinner is not presently brought to lay aside the fear of God's revengeful hand, and to embrace, and depend upon him, for the mercy that is offered to him. *Ordinarily* (I conceive) God doth manifest his Love, Goodness and Mercy to penitent Sinners, *gradually*; and with proportion to future experience, of the truth and sincerity of their Repentance. I mean such a manifestation of himself, in these *Attributes* of
compla-

complacency and benignity to Mankind; which one may term the overshadowing of the Spirit of Love upon the Soul, enlightning, refreshing, and comforting her, against the terrors of the Divine Justice due to Sin without a Propitiation by Christ.

Let me therefore advise you, to wait with patience till the *day break, and the shadows flee away*, Cant. 1. 17. *till this Sun of Righteousness arise upon your Soul with healing in his wings*, Mal. 4. 2. and to endeavour to be perswaded (as of other mens, so) of your own *filiation*, and that you may the better believe it, to bless God most frequently for the inestimable gift of his Son Jesus Christ, by whom alone a Reconciliation was wrought betwixt God and Mankind; by the Faith whereof holy Men and Women look for the inheritance of Sons and Daughters, and do not stand in fear of stripes as Vassals and Bond-slaves: being emancipated from the Spirit of Bondage, through the freedom they have by the Spirit of Adoption, whereby they cry *Abba Father*, Rom. 8. 15.

8. 15. meditating upon the greatness, and excellency of that love, the *ever-blessed* and *glorious Trinity* hath expressed unto our Souls, engraven before our eyes in *eternal Characters* of *Blood*; even the *Blood* of the *only Son* of God largely described by all four Evangelists in their Histories of the Gospel; though fundry, yea innumerable other passages of our Saviour's life are omitted S. *Jo.* 21. (yea even the Birth of *Christ* by two of them) intimating unto us, not only the *certain truth* of his Passion (which had been unquestionable if but recorded by *one* of them) and the *great concernment* of it to all Mankind, as well in the example as necessity thereof; but likewise recommending by that variety of describing the *last Tragical Act* of his Blessed Life, the *frequent perusal* of it in all times, and kinds of Trial, and Temptations.

What therefore you want of felicity (at present) and content in your *New life*, do not despair of, but expect; assuring your self, that you shall one day know, and feel, that *the Kingdom*

Kingdome of God is Righteousness, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost, Rom. 14. 17. God alone knowes how much of Heaven 'tis best to give you in this Life: that *Angelical state* which you aim at, might be much more dangerous for you then you imagine. When *St. Paul* had been wrapt up into the *third Heaven*, and heard things *impossible to be uttered*, because he should not be elated by the abundance of Revelations, there was given unto him a *thorn in the flesh*, the messenger of *Satan*, 2 Cor. 12. 7. some humiliating Temptation, that might make him know, that as yet he was *lock't up* in an Earthly Tabernacle, as lyable to the Assaults and Invasions of *Satan*, and his Complices, as to a final dissolution by death.

OBJECT.

OBJECT. XXV.

But still, methinketh, if God had such a love to my Soul, he should vouchsafe me some manifestations thereof. St. Paul rejoiced in his Infirmities, desiring to be dissolved, and to be with Christ: but nothing is so terrible to me as Death; as if I had either no Christ to go unto, or no such Christ as St. Paul had.

SOLUTION.

31. **T**HE Consideration of the *World to come*, and expectation of the *Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God*, dispensed by *Jesus Christ*, according to the things that men have done in their Bodies, whether it be good or evil, (2 Cor. 5. 10, 11.) is unquestionless a very terrible thing, even to such Christians, as shall never have their share *in the Lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for evermore*. But is it not the same Word of God which promiseth a *Pardon* to the Penitent, and threatneth Damnati-

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on to the impenitent Sinner? Why do you not believe him when he promiseth Mercy, as well as when he threatneth Vengeance? He that believes not the *Divine Majesty* in any one branch of Faith, revealed plainly in his Word, doth not believe him in the rest; because the *ground* of Faith, viz. the *Veracity* of God, is the same in all: the *same Truth* in Promises of Mercy, as in Threatnings of Punishment; the *same Fidelity* in performance of *Good* things, as in the Execution of *Evil*.

As for your instance in St. Paul, (I think) I have already intimated unto you, that he being a Saint of most eminent and exemplary piety, of a Charity and Love to Christ and his Church even unto *Extasie* and *Frenzy* in the eyes of the world, you ought not to expect the *extraordinary favours* vouchsaf'd him by Heaven. Alas! why should you or I look for so much of Heaven to be delivered to us *before-hand*? or else must judge our selves wholly unconcern'd in the distribution of those *Heavenly Mansions*? I am confident either of us would be well

well content, for such an Assurance as had *St. Paul*, to lye mouldring in our Graves a *million* of years, after the *rest* of our Brethren are crown'd with Glory; yea (perhaps) as long in the *Refining Flames* of the *Romish Purgatory*. But I mention not this as the *faint* Ejaculations of men that *live without Hope*, but as expressions suitable to a *sad Reflection* upon our own Demerits.

Remember therefore, that if God think fit to give you no *Assurance*, yet he hath vouchsaf'd unto you (with the rest of Believers) *Promises of Glorification*, much fitter to be lookt after, and relied upon, than any sensible and *experimental Consolation*: for what is tendred to us in the Holy Scriptures, is *immutable* and *permanent*: but such Conclusions as are drawn only from *experimental* Knowledge of our own Obedience, are very *transient* and uncertain; never (as is the Word of God) *infallible* and *eternal*.

As for your *Fear of Death*, which you are so far from meeting with *St. Paul's* alacrity of Spirit, that you dare not encounter the thought of it in

your Breast: the sound of a *passing Bell*, or the *Sight* of a Friend struggling with the pains of Death, being (next to your remembrance of your own last end) the formidablest thing imaginable: no question the *moral* causes thereof ought to be heeded, and the *effects* prevented. I say [*moral causes*] because I presume there is in all creatures (men not excepted) a *natural* cause of fear of Death: which may be as *innocent* in men, as the *affections* of Joy, Delight, Grief, Anger, &c. and this can be no more *alike* in all men in the world, than it can be imagined; there should be the *same* degrees of other *Affections* in all constitutions and complexions of men. Death without question is the most formidable of all things in the world; being that strong Bridle which the hand of Providence holdeth in the *Jaws* of wicked men, who else would (most of them) break out into the greatest excesses of insolency and outrageous mischief; this *great King of Terrors* overawing the most daring and violent spirits of men in the world. And of this *natural* cause of fear of death
you

you cannot but be thought to have your share; for that neither your *Sex*, nor your *Complexion*, can be supposed to season you against the but ordinary impressions of that *Afflictive* Passion.

That which I have term'd a *moral* cause of this fear, I believe you already apprehend to be that (or some *remainders* of that) *Spirit of Bondage*, mentioned by St. *Paul*, *Rom.* 8. 15. which (as it seems by that Apostle) doth in nothing more fully discover it self than in the bitter apprehensions of Death, *Heb.* 2. 15. this cannot be excused (much less encouraged) in you, or in any other; but will stand in need of much good counsel and your own most *sinewed* endeavours to remove or lessen it.

But what is it that you fear in Death? the *pains* thereof you cannot in reason fear, because you know not of what, or whether of any disease you may dye: whether you may have *pains* or no, or *sense* to feel them if you have any: though even against these you are not without a Promise (to which I am assured you have as

good a Claim as any one) viz. that God will make the merciful or charitable man's bed in his Sickness, Plal. 41. 3. though when God undertakes to make the sick man's Bed, his Soul (indeed) shall lye much easier than his Body. But That, you indeed fear, is after death; that *Thunder-clap*, which set *Felix* a trembling, when it sounded from the mouth of St. Paul, I mean, *Judgment to come*, Acts 24. 25. which for a good man to fear *too much*, is a sign of *Pusillanimity*; not to fear *at all*, is no sign of *Piety*: our God is a *consuming fire*, and in the best of us there is that *dross*, which dreads the fury of *Everlasting Burnings*. In a word, above all other *Remedies* against the fear of Death, there is none more *powerful*, yea *so* powerful, as the contemplation of the death of *Christ*, which gave the fatal blow to the *Chain of Adamant*, wherein all Mankind 'till then were led captive, being indeed the *death of death*, Hos. 13. 14. The *Representations* whereof may be (questionless) very *usefully* as well as *innocently* beheld by you, or any other Christians; but not under any barren or *melancholick* fix-

fixation of your eye or ear on the story of our Saviour's Passion: but by a wise selecting out the fruits thereof, and feeding upon them by discreet contemplation, for the strengthening of our inward man against such *intimidating* thoughts of Mortality.

Neither can I advise you to avoid any thing that may *stir* up this passion of Fear in your heart, but rather the contrary; I mean to be forward in embracing any seasonable opportunity of making these objects of sadness *familiar* to you. For besides that it is a duty of Religion, to *weep with them that weep*, Rom. 12. 15. to *visit the sick*, Matth. 25. 36. to *attend at the burial of our* (not friends only, but) *brethren*, Tob. 2. 2. yea to *bury* them with our own hands, or to do any *preparatory* office about their Corpses, if need be: you will find thereby this double advantage, *viz.* that you will most earnestly flee sin, (the cause and sting of death) and in short time gain a great victory over this Passion.

OBJECTION XXVI.

But though my fear of Death be removeable, yet is not my fear of falling away from Grace to be removed.

SOLUTION.

32. **A**ND. why do you not as well fear, that the Earth will *open*, and *swallow* you up *quick*? you have some dependence upon the Goodness and Providence of Almighty God; that he will not thus deal with you; if you had not, your fear of the *latter* would be as just, and as irremoveable, as of the *former*. For what assurance have you against the *one*, that you have not against the *other*? are not the *Souls* of men as precious in the Eyes of their *Creator* and *Redeemer*, as are their *Bodies*? can there be so great and prodigious a judgment happen to the *Body* of any man, as is God's *total* and *final* withdrawing of Grace from his *Soul*? and have you not the same *good Word* of God to depend upon in your fears of the *one*, as well as of the *other*?

other? Doth God take care for Oxen? doth he give and perform promises of Food and Rayment, and Health and Peace, &c. unto the Body, but is he a dry and a barren WilderNESS (as the Prophet expresseth it, Jer. 2. 31.) unto the Souls of his People? I shall leave you to ruminate on that Argument of St. Paul, Rom. 8. 32. He that spared not his Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Remember, I pray, that God takes his Grace from no man, who doth not abuse it. The Talents were taken from none, but him who wrapt one up in a Napkin: from him it was taken away indeed, and that justly, because he made no use of that, which was not only intended for use, but would have been increased by using. He could not help indeed the taking it from him, when God for his Sluggishness thought this the most proper punishment for the one, and reward for the other, upon their reckoning for the Talents; but by Industry he might have prevented it, as did the other two Servants.

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And to render you satisfied with an evident and full passage of Scripture, be pleased to peruse that of St. *Paul* to the *Hebrews*, Chap. 6. 15, where after he had spoken of *falling away*, and the dreadful and irrecoverable estate of *Apostacy*; he adds, that *he is persuaded better things of them, and such as are seen only in good Christians*; and his ground of that no fear, is, for that God would reward their former labour of Love with the Grace of Perseverance, the *due* reward of such (as like you) do make *use* of Grace given, as our Saviour witnesseth, *Matth.* 25. 29.

OBJECTION

OBJECTION XXVII.

But sensible alteration in me, and the promised effects of Conversion, I find none.

SOLUTION.

33. **C**onversion sounds not the same thing to me as it did to the *Jews*, and *Heathen*, in the Apostles times, and after the first Plantation of the Gospel, who are not only to suffer a *Change* in point of *moral practice*, but in point of *belief*. Neither are there any *extraordinary* Gifts of Tongues, and *Miracles*, or *Healings*, &c. to be powred out upon *new Converts*, for confirmation of Faith, and increase of Believers. When the *Jews* were come into the promised Land, *Manna* ceased; we are now in a way of ordinary dispensation, and though the Holy Ghost be the Author of *this* as well as of the *other*, and our submission to *this* as deeply exacted, yet is the *method* and *manner* of the *Oeconomy* in some sort *changed*, (at least in the *accidental* parts thereof;)

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Experience of our Religion, and the Faith of former Ages, being argument enough to convince any rational Souls of the truth of it.

Such *extraordinary* Gifts I suppose you will not look for; but if for an *extraordinary* change in your mind, (though this may be thought superfluous,) yet do but set *Repentance* from sin against *Continuance* in sin, *Obedience* against *Rebellion*, *Righteousness* against *Sin*, a *Child of God* against a *Child of Wrath*, *Heaven* against *Hell*, the *Fellowship of God and his Holy Angels* against the company of *Devils and wicked men*, *Eternal Joies* against *Eternal Torments*, and the Alteration is visible enough. But if the *Way*, bringing of you into this, must have been by *Miracle*, as was the Conversion of *St. Paul*, or with an *audible voice*, as was God's Revelation of himself unto *Samuel*; the weakness of this expectation betrays it self by the *singularity* of it, carrying with it a secret condemnation of the stupidity of other Christians, who go hood-winkt they know not whither, never thinking on any such sensible *E-*
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pip'hany, and manifestation of Christ unto their Souls.

OBJECTION XXVIII.:

But the root of Bitterness, from which most of these Doubts, Scruples, and Fears do spring, is my Aptness to fall into sin; together with such horrible thoughts startling up in my Heart, that I could even tear that Body to pieces, and rend out the Soul that harbours and Evaporates such black and stinking Eruptions.

SOLUTION.

34. **I**F the Sins, you have formerly been guilty of, are *Sins of Wilfulness*, and the Relapse you may be thought to intend in your Objection, be into *such* sins; then is your case so much the more dangerous, by how much the more certain it is, that such *sins of Wilfulness* are not reconcileable to a state of Regeneracy. The determination whereof I must refer to the Judgment of him, with whom you shall

shall think fit to entrust the *Anatomy* of your Soul. But if they are but Sins of *Humane* and *Personal* infirmity, then I shall offer to your consideration these two things. First, that it being supposed, that the Sins you mention are only *Sins of Infirmity*; that *Relapses* into such sins are no new thing to every Child of God, as being *Spots* so inseparable from a state of Mortality; that the Spirit of God hath styled them by the mouth of *Moses*, the *Spots of God's Children*, Deut. 32. 5. Secondly, that it is not to be expected, that there should be an *Equality* of the Number or *Kinds* of these sins, in all the Children of God; some being guilty of more, some of fewer; some of more of one kind of *Sins of Infirmity*, some of another; and much of this, not only depending upon the diversity of the measure of Grace given, but likewise upon the *different* Complexions, and *former* Habits of those Christians, before their Penitence and Reformation.

But if the case be of other Sins, viz. of *Sins of Wilfulness*, then observe, that

that there is a very considerable difference (at least in your apprehension perhaps) betwixt the *aptness* or *facility* of falling into Sin, and *actual* relapsing thereinto. You find (perchance) the temptations are frequent and strong upon you, and your enemy very indefatigable and restless; and you fear, that the *Battery* in the end will be too forcible for the *Fortification* to hold out against it; that these *Assaults* of *Flesh* and *Blood* will not only *storm*, but *take*, or else *surprise* your Resolution: but all this while this is but anxiety; and if those temptations do get ground of you, draw your Will to some short *parly* with them, and thereby increase your fear of *yielding* to the Enemy, yet is there no relapse: and if there were, yet ought you to have comfort against temptations to despair of *final* victory; because these *utmost* endeavours of yours, together with your grief conceived for but inclining to, these temptations, will render your condition commiserable in the eyes of your tender and compassionate Father: who will in the end make
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his *strength* to be seen in your *weakness*, giving you good reason to ascribe the Cause as well as the Honour of the Victory to him alone, by whom *you shall be able to do all things*. Phil.

4. 13.

But to prevent your danger by Temptation, you shall do well to open your condition *freely* to some *Grave, Pious, Discreet, and Learned Divine*, one well seen in the *study* of mens *Consciences*, (a great *rarity* I must tell you amongst Protestants,) to have *often* conference with him, to confess freely to him, to receive *directions* from him, for preventing your guilt and trouble, to *communicate* frequently: the *Blessed Sacrament* having a *special designation* for those in your condition, refreshing of wearied Souls, being the great intendment of that Commemoration of *Christ's* death: all *Temptations* under such *hard* usage, as is now prescribed, will wither away, and dye in their prime: which by our private endeavours of *eradication*, do most times exceed our fears, as well as our expectations, in the growth of them.

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As for the other part of your Objection, wherein you complain of the depravity and corruption of your nature, belcht out many times in *prodigious* thoughts of your heart, (it may be, against the *goodness*, or *justice*, or perhaps against the very *essence* of the *Divine Majesty*,) the more holy you desire to be, the more grievous will such thoughts (as you call them) be unto you. Therefore be pleased to consider, 1. That in my judgment; many of these are not your *own thoughts*, or *notions* of corrupt nature in you, as you conceive, but really *injections* of Satan, strongly favouring of malice against God, and the merciful work of our Redemption. This I take to be it, which is called the Devil's *putting* of somewhat into mens hearts, as he did the *treason* of *Judas*, the prevarication of *Ananias* and *Saphira*, *David's* numbring the People, and *St. Peter's effeminate suggestions* to our Saviour, &c. These sometimes are punishments for sin, either in our selves or others; sometimes only Trials from God, for the manifestation of the power of his Grace in mens Souls:

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and I suppose they are not duly styl'd our Thoughts, till they are admitted and treated by us, they then become our sinful thoughts as soon as we incline to entertain and embrace them. And 2. I doubt not, but such as these may be injected into holy men, as in the case of *David* and *Peter*, as we have instanced before. Yea, and not so only, but they may be hardned too, and embraced, and consequently their state endangered till renewed again by Faith and Repentance.

Wherefore if you reject and not own them, grieving for them as punishments for sin, praying against them, and perfectly hating them, with what e're is the Author of them, having an holy jealousy over your own nature, labouring to shut the Den of your Heart against such intruders, and to give the possession of the *considerable Fort* to better *friends* to *your* salvation; *you* are not hereby endangered by present Guilt, or engaged under just fear of *Apostacy*; your state in this (as in all other things) being not without example in the dearest Children of God.

OBJECT. XXIX.

*But God hath manifested his Displeasure
against me in many accidents of life.*

SOLUTION.

35. **I**T may be God's *not giving you Children*, is principally intended by you in this Objection: the *Key* of the Womb being (as the *Hebrews* are wont to say) in the hands of God; there being indeed a more *immediate* concurrence of the *Divine Majesty* required to the Fruit thereof than to the *production* of other things in the ordinary course of Providence. I have known this prevail very far with some of your Sex, *heightning* their perplexities from that of St. Paul to *Timothy*; 1 *Ep.* 2. 15. from whence they conclude, That if a Woman continue *barren* in a state of Marriage; there is no hopes of her Salvation; that depending *so necessarily* upon the former condition of *Child-bearing*. To this we answer by these degrees.

1. It is no mark of God's *irreversi-*

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ble anger against us, that many *cross* Accidents befall us in this life, seeing they are generally acknowledged to be, not only matter of advantage to our Souls, bettering us by such chastisements; but they ought to be apprehended as *Signatures* or *Marks* of our Adoption: St. *Paul* having *illegitimated* all such as are not own'd by God for Sons by these Fatherly corrections of them, *Heb.* 12. 8. Very far are they too from being *distinctive Prognosticks* of those everlasting Distributions at the day of Judgment, in the opinion of King *Solomon*, who tells you, *That no man knoweth either Love or Hatred by all that is before them. Eccle.* 9.1.

2. Where God hath *given Children*, and by some evil accidents taken them away, there may more justly be supposed a manifestation of God's heavy displeasure, than where he *gives no Children at all*: yet that hath been the case of many holy men and women, as appears in the example of *Job* and *David*, whose Histories are furnisht with most remarkable passages to this purpose, their Lives being
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chequered (as one may say) with various contingencies of good and evil.

3. Be it granted that *Barrenness* among the *Jews* was reputed a *Curse*, and that God threatned it as a judgment upon them to have *miscarrying wombs*, and *dry Breasts*; yet ought it not to have that Character with us Christians, who are not engaged to obedience by promises of *temporal*, but of *spiritual* and *eternal* blessings: things of that concernment even in those dayes (clouded with shadowing and carnal ordinances,) that God himself proposes them to the obedient *Eunuchs*, as a full (indeed superabundant) satisfaction for their *Sterility*, *Jf. 56.5*, The truth is, there ought not to be (neither is there, without our own fault) any *barrenness* in Christians of either Sex, the forming of Christ in their Souls (intimated by the Apostle, *Gal. 4.19.*) being a *mystical Birth* in all the Sons and Daughters of God; and not without some reflection on this, did the *Church* appoint the *Magnificat* of that Blessed Virgin, to be publickly sung in her *Liturgy*; it being hoped that every

member thereof would consider, that they were bound *to bring forth this fruit unto God.*

4. Lastly, for that of the Apostle to *Timothy*, the sense is so obvious, and that false interpretation so remote from the wisdom, goodness, and truth of God; that it is strange, the *fancies* even of Women (which 'tis confessed are very forcible) should be able by any *Chimistry* of Imagination, to extract such a disproportional meaning from that Text. For St. *Paul* having fixt that Sex in their due place of subordination in the Church; that he might give them some reasons to be content with that portion, mentions the order of their Creation, the Woman being not only formed after *Adam*, as that signifies *order* of Time, but of Nature also, (the Man being, as one may speak, the *first running of the Metal*;) and her being *first* in the Transgression (a token of weakness and frailty) as the grounds upon which he builds a *Conclusion* or *Canon* for the *order*; not so likely to stand fast, upon the bare authority even of the Apostle himself, without
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being *cemented* and *crankt* with very good and undeniable reasons. But yet, not to leave them under the dishonour of being *first* in that fatal Crime, (Ringleaders in Rebellion seldom tasting of that mercy which is shewed to their Followers) and likewise to keep them from being thrust out of that place, by the anger and insolence of the other Sex, the Apostle tells them, that by the fruit of their Womb they made amends for the miseries and mischiefs of their fault; the *Remedy* coming by them (namely the *Incarnation of Christ*) as well as the *Disease*; Of the efficacy whereof they were likewise to have their part, if they should *continue* to perform the conditions of that merciful Covenant; the Apostle very seasonably minding them of *constancy* in their Professions and Practice: of which the *first* of that sex shewed no good example, in her hearkning to the suggestions of the Serpent in Paradise.

More (perhaps) might be said to this purpose, but the apprehensions I have of your abilities and *art* of Discerning, beyond the common capa-

city of your sex, having already check'd me for falling into this solemn and foreseen *Digression*.

Thus, *Madam*, have I given you my thoughts in these general and conjectural Applications, hoping that they may possibly light on the whole, or some part of the *cause* of your trouble. I have offered them to you, not so much in acknowledgment of those favours I have heretofore received from your self, and your dear Husband (since with God,) though my Obligation thereby could not be discharged by a far greater attempt to recompense them,) as for the tender respect I have to your afflicted state. That this should do a perfect cure, (though I know God doth (many times) *great* things by *small* means,) I have no *grounded* hopes to believe: not only because of the *defects* and *impotence* of my Endeavours, but for that *Diseases* of this kind are *influenced* upon by the distempers or complexion of the *Patient*, and have a secret and *malign aspect* upon them from many circumstances, not guessable (I presume) by persons more acute than

than I can deserve to be thought.

I know *Divines* should not undertake to cure, like *Empericks*, by *Gues- ses*, and at *randome*; and therefore, *Madam*, I have not obscurely intimated my desire unto you in this Paper, to make a very seasonable and home address to some *one of a Thousand*, Job. 33. 23. a skilful *Physician of Souls*; that you may not be thought to *sub- ordinate* the care of your better and eternal part to that *Cabinet of beautiful Earth*, wherein God hath lock'd up that *rich Jewel* for some few years: I am confident, *Madam*, it is not only the best, but the only Counsel you can follow with assurance (by God's blessing) of *curing* these *wounds* in your spirit: no, if I have but *clean- sed* and *wip'd*, or done the least other good office of *helping* forward their *Cure*, as I ought (and you) to give all the Praise thereof to God, so shall it be esteemed a plentiful Reward for this little labour of (*Madam*)

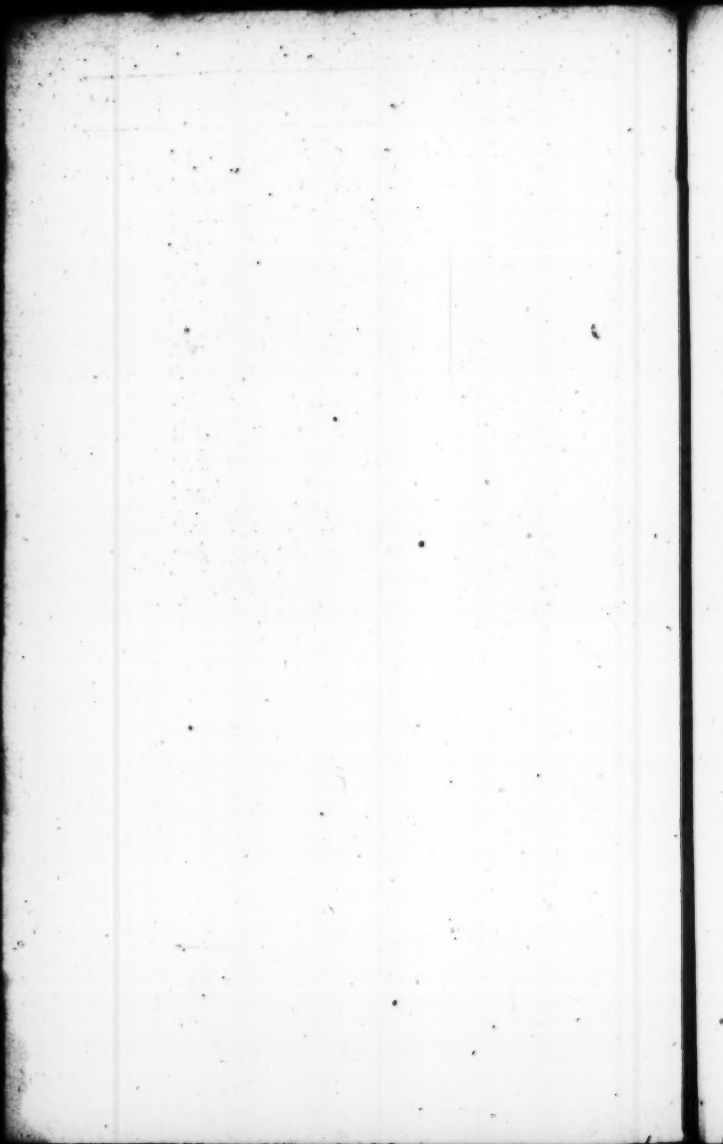
Your Affectionate Servant
in Christ Jesus.

A PRAYER.

O Almighty God, the Creator and Preserver of Humane Spirits, the Searcher of all Hearts, who knowest and tryest all our wayes, and understandest our thoughts a far off; from thy Love any Bounty it is, and not from our Desert, that we have any measure of Grace, whereby we may know and obey thy Will, and impression of Godly Sorrow, when we have broken thy Laws, any desire to resolution and performance of what is pleasing in thy sight, after we have erred and strayed from the paths of thy Commandements. Mercifully, I beseech thee, to behold all such as are grieved, oppressed, and perplexed in Spirit, through the guilt of Sin, weakness of Grace, frailty of Nature, or the devices of our grand Enemy and Accuser. Especially be mindful of thy Servant B.B. who hath desired the Prayers of me thy most unworthy Servant, and grievous Sinner. O Lord, to Thee are known all the causes and occasions of her trouble and confusion of Spirit; the distra-

distractions and terrors of her Soul are not hid from thine Eyes. O thou that hast the Balm of Gilead, the Soul-healing oyl of Mercy, and pardon of Sin, pour the same, I most humbly beseech, into her wounded Spirit; bind up this bruised Reed, kindle this smoaking Flax, preserve her from the snares of Satan, free her from the delusions and errors of a deceitful Imagination, and vouchsafe to her such a measure of Spiritual Consolation, that her Soul may be comforted and strengthened thereby, to the finishing of her course with joy, through a final victory over all her Enemies, by the goodness and power of Jesus Christ our Saviour, Amen.

F I N I S.



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